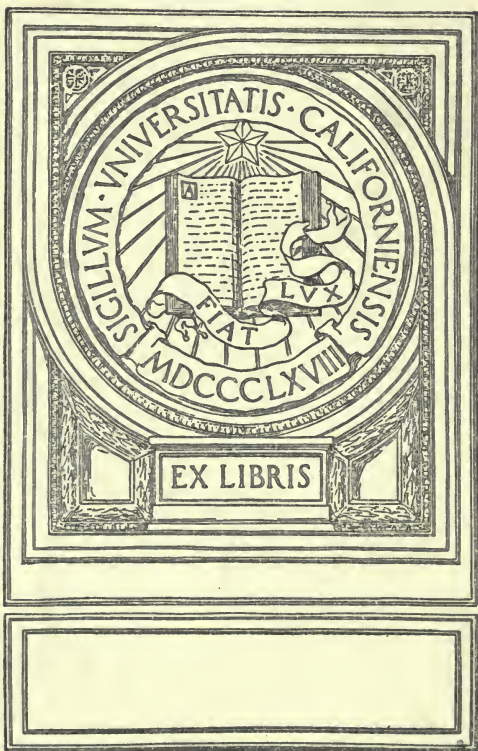




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Trollope, Frances (Milton)

CHARLES CHESTERFIELD,

OR THE

ADVENTURES

OF A

YOUTH OF GENIUS.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHORESS OF

"THE WIDOW BARNABY," "THE WIDOW MARRIED," "MICHAEL
ARMSTRONG," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I,

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1841.

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WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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ILLUSTRATIONS
TO
CHARLES CHESTERFIELD.

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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
CHARLES CHESTERFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

Great News—An English Farmhouse as it ought to be—
Family Gossipings—The Hero introduced and shown
to be capable of sustaining a favourable Reverse of For-
tune, without Extravagant Glee.

“THIS is a great event, a very great event,”
said the gray-headed but still comely Thomas
Chesterfield, as he finished the perusal of a
short epistle which the cross-country postman
had handed to him through the open window of
his rustic parlour.

“What have you got there, my dear?” demanded his wife, withdrawing her hand from the stocking she was mending, and taking up her snuffbox in its stead.

“I have got here, Dorcas, what will make your heart dance. But keep quiet, sit still; don’t twiddle your snuffbox, and I will read it to you. It is dated Gloucester, my dear, ‘Gloucester, 22d April, 1838,’ and it begins, ‘Sir!’ and then it goes on, ‘I am commissioned by Messrs. White and Bricknell to inform you that by the will of the late Mrs. Catherine Newton, of Fairlybury, your son, Charles Chesterfield, is entitled to the sum of four thousand four hundred pounds, together with a diamond ring, which, as recorded in said will, the said Charles Chesterfield kissed upon the forefinger of the said Catherine Newton’s right hand, in the year 1823. Understanding that the said Charles Chesterfield is still an infant, the said sum of four thousand four hundred pounds, together with the said diamond ring, will be paid over and delivered into your hands, you being his natural guardian, upon

your applying at the office of Messrs. White and Bricknell, College-street, Gloucester, for the same."

"Thomas Chesterfield!" replied his wife solemnly, "such news is too great and too good to believe lightly. I am not sure if it would not be something like impiety to believe it just at the very first moment, as if we could think ourselves deserving of such an unaccountable dispensation and blessing! And think, Thomas, what a bitter thing disappointment is! God forgive me! But I do believe it would go near to break my heart if I *was* to make up my mind to believe it, and then find out that it was not true after all. Don't let us believe it till we have got more certainty, Thomas! Pray don't."

"If you will tell me, my dear, how I can get more certainty," replied her husband, joyously rubbing his hands, "I'll set about it, and no time lost, depend upon it. But I must say, wife, this letter strikes me as being as much like a true statement as any thing I ever saw."

"I'd say so too, Thomas, though I am no

great judge of such matters, to be sure, but I'd venture to say that it did look quite real if it wasn't for one word. Doesn't it look like making fun, husband, the calling our Charles an infant?"

"Bless your dear innocent heart! Is that all?" replied old Chesterfield, laughing heartily. "A pretty good proof that I have contrived to keep true to my own doctrine, and taught my good woman to mind her own business, and never trouble herself about that of other people. Thank God, my dear, you know no more about the lawyers and their lingo than you do about the Emperor of Russia, or the Pope of Rome. But I must now let you into their ways so much as to tell you that they never speak of man, or woman either, under the age of twenty-one years, without calling them *infants*, and therefore they are quite right, you see, about our Charles, for he won't be twenty-one till next December. Will he, my dear?"

"No, that he won't, for sure and certain," replied Mrs. Chesterfield. "On the seven-

teenth of next December, by the blessing of God, he will be twenty-one years old, and not one minute before, and if that's enough to prove the truth of it, true it is, and no falsehood in it. And don't I remember, Thomas, the darling cretur's kissing Mrs. Catherine's ring? That's what I do, as well as if it had happened but yesterday. And well do I remember, too, the notice she took of him, and how she pushed back his pretty curly hair to look at him; and I mind her very words as she did it, 'Ive got a pretty godson any how,' said the old lady, kissing him. 'It is a pity,' says she, 'that my poor old friend didn't live to see her grandson, and he such a beauty!' But who would ever have thought that just because this notion about his prettiness entered her head when the child kissed her ring, she should have bequeathed it to him, and a fine large fortune into the bargain? It is past my comprehension, Thomas Chesterfield, and that's the truth."

"Then in course, my dear, if you can't comprehend it nobody else can," replied her hus-

band, twinkling his laughing black eyes; "so perhaps it will be no use for us to stir any further in the matter."

"Oh, Thomas! How can you make a joke about it, even for a moment?" replied Mrs. Chesterfield, looking terrified at his levity. "Over-merriment is always sure to bring over-sorrow after it; and besides, dear husband! it is no fit matter to joke about, any how. Think what a thing it is to have all our trouble over about that dear wonderful boy! Four thousand four hundred pounds, Thomas, is a fortune for a gentleman, and he may live independent upon it to the end of his dear blessed life, without ever being pestered more about having to get his own living. Think of that, husband, and let us thank God."

"I do, Dorcas, I do. It is indeed a most blessed chance, and as unexpected as it is welcome. Mercy on me! It is hardly an hour ago since I felt a pang at my heart, as I watched Charles with his reading-book under one arm, and his writing-book under the other, walking as usual into the orchard, as if there was nothing

else to be done but read and scribble from morning to night."

"And now, blessed be God! there is no need that he should ever do any thing else," said the happy mother. "The parson, and I too, Thomas, have told you, scores of times, that the dear creature wasn't made to dig, nor to delve, no, nor to manage a farm neither, as his good father has done before him. Don't it seem as if God had managed it all from the very first, when our vicar took such a fancy for teaching of him?"

"And when you took such a fancy for persuading every body that because he was tall and thin, with a pale face, curly hair, and pretty eyes, he was born to be a scholar and a gentleman?" replied her husband.

"Yes sure, husband. It has been all providential throughout, and I shouldn't wonder, no, not the least bit in the world, if Mr. Westbrook was to allude to it in the afternoon discourse next Sunday. He wouldn't be likely to do it in the morning, I don't think, because it isn't impossible but some of the Grange family

might be at church, and they might think the compliment was over particular, you know."

"Likely enough, wife. But now you talk of the Grange, I can't but think that it would be no more than proper for me to step over and tell Sir George the news. Only I should like to tell our Charles of it first. He'll be at the vicar's, I conclude; but I suppose I must not run over the fields to tell 'em, must I, wife."

"What! without me?" cried the good woman. "Oh, Thomas! you could not have the heart to do it. Could you, now?"

"I don't think I could, Dorcas, that's the truth; so I believe we must be contented to wait till the dear boy comes home to dinner."

"But I shall burst, Thomas, if I can't tell it to nobody before that time. Isn't it unlucky that Christopher should happen to go this very day about the Welsh sheep?"

"At any rate, my dear, we can tell Susan, and her little niece, you know, and there will be no small pleasure in that. Won't Bessy's pretty eyes dance in her head?" said the good-

natured farmer, again rubbing his hands together with unspeakable glee.

“No doubt the dear child will be delighted,” replied Mrs. Chesterfield. “She is a kind loving-hearted little creature as ever lived, and I shall never like her less than I have ever done from the first day as Christopher let his wife bring her into the house. She has been a good child to them, and to me too. But it won’t do, you know, Thomas, noways at all to encourage any nonsense now between her and Charles. Things are altogether changed, and that Susan must see, and Christopher too.”

“Bless your dear head, Dorcas! How women’s thoughts do gallop! Why, Bessy is but a child, and, pretty as she is, I don’t believe Charles ever thought of her no more than if she was his own sister.”

“So much the better. And now remember, husband, that we never, either of us, mention such a notion again to any body. It is a deal too silly to think of, and there’s an end of it. Come along, then; Susan and the girl are both in the cheese-room, you may depend upon it,

for I heard them walking about wiping the stock over, whilst we were eating our breakfast.”

The venerable farmhouse in which this conversation took place was a fine specimen of what farmhouses ought to be, and what many of them were in the olden time, uniting a sort of rude dignity with all the professional peculiarities necessary to the convenience of the occupant. It was not a red-roofed, white-walled tenement, having a parlour on one side and a kitchen on the other of its doorway, but was fabricated of large blocks of stone, to which time had given that sober tint of gray on which the eye rests with such unfailing pleasure. Its slated roof nearly corresponded in colour, and proudly reared itself at the front of the building into four lofty peaks, each one surmounted by a carefully-preserved huge ball of lead, which added greatly, in the estimation of the Chesterfield family, to the beauty of the building. Beneath each point was a widely-spreading casement-window, with mullions of neatly-cut stone, though the diamond-shaped little panes be-

tween were still set in lead, and supported without by iron bars. In size, the mansion was perhaps rather larger than was necessary, as the chamber denominated the cheese-room might have satisfied a dame of no very lowly ambition as a ball-room, and not one of the sleeping apartments of the family was less than about twenty feet square, except indeed that of little Bessy, which was over the somewhat narrow entrance-hall, having a pretty window of smaller dimensions, and lighter proportions than the rest, and exhibiting therefore the only suspicious point in the otherwise very consistent antiquity of the whole fabric. On the ground floor, though the external appearance remained unaltered, there had been some few twistings and turnings contrived, by which the actual windows of the principal sitting-room had been turned towards the orchard, instead of fronting the high-road; an improvement suggested at the marriage of Mr. Chesterfield's father with the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, who was said to have been greatly addicted to reading, and who was in truth the identical

lady for whose memory Mrs. Catherine Newton had testified such affectionate regard. On the opposite side of the house from this large quiet parlour, was the enormous kitchen, with its chimney that seemed a dwelling within itself; its wide-spreading dresser, still gorgeous in its rare treasure of well-preserved pewter, its long, narrow, six-inch-thick table of solid oak, its well-stored rack of hams and bacon, its settle, its benches, its vast meal-bin, and all the other unfailing appurtenances to a farmhouse kitchen, so dearly familiar to eyes well-accustomed to the country, and so redolent both of rural labour and of rural ease.

The shortest way to the little staircase, always used for approaching the cheese-room, lay through this kitchen, and it was not without an effort that Mrs. Chesterfield passed by her old and faithful servant Rachel, who was busily engaged in preparing the dinner, without giving her a little hint that she had received some very glorious news; but she perceived that her husband folded up the letter and put it into his pocket with an air of determined

silence as he preceded her, so she suffered no more of her happiness to escape than could be compressed into the unusually jocund pronunciation of the words, "Well, dear good old Rachel! how do *you* do?" She waited for no answer, however, lest the inquiring look of the old woman's eye might beguile her into indiscretion, but stepping on briskly after her husband, gently seized upon his arm as he mounted the stair, saying,

"Let us go in together, Thomas!"

They did go in together, and as there was no letter in the old gentleman's hand, and nothing more intelligible than a smile on the old lady's lip, those they had come to visit went on with their occupations, without testifying either surprise or curiosity at their arrival.

"The stock is in fine condition, mother," said Mrs. Christopher Chesterfield, adding to the neatly-built pile of "double Gloucester," that reared its goodly bulk before her, the cheese she had just wiped.

"Is it, my dear?" replied the old lady, with a very unmeaning titter.

“Have I not worked well, granny?” demanded the very prettiest rustic beauty, whose round arms and dimpled hands ever ministered to the nice manœuvres of a dairy. “I have done every one of these my own self; all these I mean, from here to there!” and as she spoke she raised herself from her stooping posture and threw herself into so pretty an attitude as she indicated the extent of her labours, that a sudden light seemed to flash across the intellect of the worthy yeoman, and he quite unconsciously exclaimed, “Well, now, to be sure it will be very odd if he don’t!”

These words being quite unintelligible to Bessy, she threw away the neat linen cloth which was the only implement of her boasted industry, and springing towards the old man, encircled his right arm with both her own, looking very lovingly into his face, and saying, “Please to tell me what you are talking about, grandpapa?”

“I have got something to show both of ye,” said the old gentleman, goodhumouredly patting her glossy brown hair with the hand she had

left at liberty; "but I can't, you know, if you hold my arm this way."

"Now then! let us see it!" cried the young girl, placing her hands behind her to demonstrate his being at perfect liberty.

"We have great news for you, my dear Susan,—great news, I consider it, for all the family," said Mr. Chesterfield, drawing forth the important letter. "This is all I have got to show you, Bessy," he continued; "but there's that in it as you'll think worth more than a new bonnet, if you are the good-hearted little girl I take you for."

"What *can* there be in that letter, father, to make both mother and you look so unaccountably happy? To be sure the Thompsons haven't given up the water-course, have they?"

"No, Susan, that's not it," replied her father-in-law, slowly unfolding the precious letter, as if to prolong his own enjoyment.

"Oh, don't be so long about it, husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Chesterfield, "or upon my word and honour I shall speak it out straight, without waiting for the reading."

“Listen, then, my dears,” said the old man, “and then tell us, both of you, what you think about it.”

While he said this, Mr. Chesterfield put on his spectacles, the open letter being so held the while as effectually to prevent any younger eyes from penetrating its contents, and then deliberately and distinctly read it aloud, from date to signature, his good wife enjoying herself the while by looking first at one face and then at the other of the astonished listeners.

“Our Charles going to have a fortune of four thousand four hundred pounds, and a ring made of diamonds?” exclaimed Mrs. Christopher Chesterfield, almost in a scream.

“Yes, Susan my dear, that’s what’s going to happen to him,” said Mr. Chesterfield, folding up the letter with a sort of sublime composure.

“If that’s in the letter, you shan’t put it away till I have kissed it,” cried the long-chartered Bessy, catching it out of his hand, and pressing it again and again to her cherry-coloured lips. “Poor Charles! Poor dear fellow! Then he never need be told any more about being idle,

because he is not so healthy and strong as the rest of us. Poor dear Charles! ain't I glad, I wonder! No, aunt Susan, we did never—did we?—hear such good news as that before in all our lives, did we?"

"I don't know which way to turn for joy," responded Mrs. Christopher; "and my good man will be gladder still, if possible. How he has fretted and fretted over that poor dear boy, and prayed and preached to him into the bargain; but all to no good. Now, thank God! there is an end to it all, and the poor fellow may be as idle as he likes, without bringing ruin upon himself or any body else."

"There's no great likelihood of ruin to my son Charles, at any rate, Mrs. Susan," said her mother-in-law rather tartly; "and I should not be greatly surprised if some others, besides me, were to find out now what I have often tried to teach them before—namely, that Charles Chesterfield was born to be the honour of his family,—not the ruin of it."

"Oh, dear mother!" returned Susan, submissively; "I did not say ruin that way. But

you can't be angry with me, mother, you must be too happy to be angry. Where is the dear fellow? Let us go and wish him joy."

"He would look mightily startled if you did," said the farmer; "for he does not know a single word about it yet."

"That's right!" cried Bessy, clapping her pink little hands. "Then I shall be by when he's told, shan't I, grandpapa?"

"Yes, you shall, Bessy; and if Christopher was but here, every thing would be quite perfect."

"Can't you put off the telling till Christopher comes, father?" said Susan, beseechingly.

But this proposal, despite its exemplary conjugal tenderness, was overruled by the united voices of both the elders; and the party adjourned to the parlour, where the cloth was already laid for dinner, and there placed themselves in happy but anxious conclave till the hero of the morning's wonderful adventure should appear.

Three times did Mr. Chesterfield, at the request of one or the other of his companions,

draw forth his ponderous watch to inform them how many slow-footed minutes had still to creep away before they might hope to hear the sonorous clock in the hall strike two ; and twice did Bessy, unable to control her impatience, steal into a side closet that opened by a glass-door upon the orchard, and commanded a full view of the path across the paddock which led to the vicarage, in the hope of seeing the beloved legatee approaching. But with all these well-imagined devices to pass the time away, it seemed endless. And who can wonder, when in fact it was three minutes and a half past two when at length the sound of steps became audible on the gravel-walk, which led up to the above-mentioned glass-door ?

“ Here he is ! ” cried Bessy, whose ears were the first to catch the sound ; and as she spoke she started to her feet, giving thereby cause to suspect that she meditated the iniquity of running off to meet him.

“ No, no, Bessy,” said the old lady, making her way towards the closet of egress ; “ fair play’s a jewel, no forestalling, if you please. If

I consent to stay here with the rest and wait for him, I am sure every body else may."

Thus schooled, Bessy sat down again, and so did Mrs. Chesterfield also; her husband and daughter-in-law attempted not to stir, and as the chairs they occupied were all placed against the wall, the whole party looked very much like a set of children, who were doing penance.

At length the wished-for moment came; the glass-door was heard to open, and the instant after, the slight figure of Charles Chesterfield, his straw hat in one hand, and rather more books than he could conveniently carry in the other, stood within the parlour.

"I am afraid that I am very late," he exclaimed, as he entered; "but Mr. Westbrook's watch stopped, and we had not the least idea how time was going. Are you all angry with me, or only making fun, that you sit round so stiff and formal?"

Bessy burst into a jocund laugh.

"Thank you, Bessy," said the young man, stepping forward, "I don't mind now, all's right,

I see; but I really am very sorry for having kept you all waiting."

While he was speaking his mother rose from her chair, and reaching the place where he stood, just as he had finished the sentence, threw her arms round him, and silently pressed him to her bosom in a very passionate embrace.

Hardly had this ended, when both his hands were taken by his father, and very energetically pressed, while with glistening eyes the old man fervently uttered,

"God bless you, boy!"

Puzzled and half-frightened, though he knew not why, the young man mechanically turned his eyes towards his sister-in-law, thinking it may be that he might learn from her how to interpret a reception so perfectly unintelligible to him. But if he looked at her with any such hope, he met nothing but disappointment; for more mysterious, if possible, than all the rest, she sat with her hands clasped, as in deep thoughtfulness, while a shower of tears bedewed her handsome face.

"What *can* all this mean?" demanded the

young man, placing himself at some distance from them all, and regarding the whole group collectively. "What can have happened to make you all receive me so strangely? Pray tell me, father, has any thing particular occurred since breakfast this morning? Thank God! it can't be any thing very bad to any of us, or else Bessy wouldn't laugh so."

"I will tell you, my dear boy," replied Mr. Chesterfield; "and truly you have a right to ask, for our strange looks may well puzzle you. Yes, Charles, something particular has happened, something very particular, and it is about yourself, Charles; and that is the reason why you found us all sitting up waiting for you so."

"Something very particular about me, father? Oh! father! you haven't let Christopher persuade you to article me to Mr. Williams, have you, sir?"

"No, Charles, no. Christopher would have been the last to do such a thing. He only named it, because he thought you would be likely to prefer the law to farming. But it is nothing of that sort, my boy; and if you stand

guessing for a twelvemonth, you'll never find it out. Have you any recollection, Charles, of an old lady called Mrs. Catherine Newton, whom your mother once took you to see at a fine large house, where there was a beautiful garden, and a great big hall where you ran about, and rode upon my stick?"

"I don't remember riding upon your stick, sir; but I do remember the old lady, and the room that she sat in, and the fine large screen all covered with pictures, that was behind her."

"That old lady is dead my dear boy."

"Is she, sir?" said Charles.

"Do you remember any thing else about her, my dear?" demanded his mother. "Do you remember any thing about a beautiful diamond ring?"

Charles shook his head.

"No, mother," he said, "I remember nothing at all about the ring. But could we not talk about the old lady without waiting any longer for our dinner? You cannot think how hungry I am."

"Oh, Charles! Charles!" exclaimed Mrs. Chesterfield, again opening her arms to embrace

him; "that old lady, that dear, blessed old lady, has left you by her will—may I tell him, Thomas? May I be the one to tell?"

"Her beautiful diamond ring, I suppose?" exclaimed the youth. "Well, mother, and if she has, I'll give it to Bessy, because she has such uncommon pretty little hands; unless, indeed, it is too big to fit her nice little fingers; and if it is, I will give it to you. Only, do let us have some dinner."

"Yes, Charles," said Mr. Chesterfield, gravely, "Mrs. Catherine Newton did leave you her diamond ring, which is a very different thing from what you seem to fancy, and one not to be given away in that wild way to any body. But that was not all she left you, my dear son: she has done a great deal more than that. Do you think you have strength of mind to hear some very good news?"

"Yes, father: I hope so," said the youth, in an altered voice, which betokened both gravity and agitation.

"She has left to you, Charles Chesterfield, the sum of four thousand four hundred pounds."



"The announcement of good news"

“Father!” cried the boy, almost gasping for breath; “will it be enough to keep me without working at farming, or at being a doctor, or a lawyer, or any thing else?”

“Yes, my dear boy, I should think it would.”

“Thank God!” cried the young man. “Thank God! no wonder you kissed me, dear mother. Indeed, you must all kiss me, and wish me joy; for certainly, I am the happiest fellow in the world!” and following his own suggestion, he very cordially embraced the three females and then wrung his father’s hand, saying, with deep feeling, “God grant, my dear sir, that I may never use this money in any way that you shall not approve; and don’t fancy that I want to lead an idle life from what I have just said. Many people work very hard, dear father, without following any trade or calling. Mr. Westbrook will explain that to you, if you will ask him.”

“By giving themselves up altogether to book-learning? That is what you mean, Charles, is it not? If such is your wish, my dear boy, there can be no harm in it now; though, to say the

honest truth, I don't see much good in it, either. However, that's neither here nor there. If your will is to be a great scholar, I know no one that has a right to say you nay. Your elder brother will inherit from me the same hundred and thirty-seven acres that I inherited from my father, neither more nor less. If this good luck had come to you, Charles, I must have charged the land with something to the tune, perhaps, of seven or eight hundred pounds, to set you going in some way or other. But now, no such thing will be necessary; so one and all we have reason to rejoice as you said, my dear fellow, as well for our own sakes as yours. But you said you were starving ever so long ago, and old Rachel must be at her wits' end to guess why we don't ring the bell."

"I do not feel so hungry as I did, father," said Charles, pensively.

"You have dined upon good news, Charles, haven't you?" said Bessy, looking kindly at him.

"I suppose I have," was the reply, but it was uttered with a gravity that made Susan smile,

as she thought to herself that her young brother-in-law was already beginning to be conscious of the mighty cares proverbially inseparable from wealth.

But the bell was rung, and the dinner come; and old Rachel, and Sally the dairymaid, and Joe the man of all work, were all made happy, and full of gossip for a month, by being told the news, and invited to drink their lucky young master's health in a bumper of gooseberry-wine.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Westbrook is made acquainted with Charles Chesterfield's good Fortune, and gives his Opinion concerning the mode of employing it—The Young Man does not quite agree with him.

A DESSERT does not necessarily make part of the dinner of a Gloucestershire farmer, even when he farms no man's land but his own, and that land consists of one hundred and thirty-seven acres. So as soon as the servants had taken their gooseberry-wine, uttered their salutations, and retired, Mr. Chesterfield got up, and once again drawing from his enormous fob its massive occupant, said,

“There is plenty of time yet for me to make a morning visit to Sir George, and truly I must

take care that none other than myself carry this news to him. Come, Charles, come with me, will you? We shall have a pleasant walk, boy; with such news on our tongues, and the vicar won't blame you for giving your books a holiday this afternoon."

"No, father; that's quite certain. But yet I hope you will excuse my going to the Grange with you. Should not Mr. Westbrook be the first I tell it to, father? Tell me, shouldn't he?"

"I can't say but what he should, Charles; I won't deny it; so you must go your way, my dear boy, and I must go mine, while we leave the women to enjoy talking the matter over by themselves. Won't Sally be mistress in the dairy to-night? I don't believe either one of you will have any mind to look after her, and therefore, Bessy, as I am quite sure you will make holiday, you may come across the fields if you will, in about an hour's time, and walk along home with me."

Notwithstanding the precedence due to age, it is our young hero we shall follow first. He

left the parlour at the same time as his father ; for, till they reached the boundary of the orchard, their path was the same. There they parted ; the old man bending his steps to the showy residence of a man of the world who, though not in parliament himself, knew perfectly well the exact value of every vote for a friend who was, as well as the worth of sundry other neighbourly accommodations which the familiar intercourse between himself and old Chesterfield was sure to bring ; and the young one taking the well-known path to the dwelling of the vicar, who presented, perhaps, as strong a contrast to Sir George Meddows in all things, as it was well possible to find.

It was with a quick and eager step that Charles Chesterfield strode onward from the point at which he quitted his father, in order to reach the very humble parsonage of his bachelor friend. But after a minute or two his pace relaxed ; the flurry of his spirits which had made the immediate communication of the change in his fortune seem absolutely necessary to him, subsided ; and such a longing for

solitude and meditation succeeded, that he turned hastily aside from the pathway to seek the shelter of an oak coppice at no great distance. True, indeed, the rich leaves of vigorous undergrowth which in the summer made the spot he sought a sylvan bower, were as yet wrapped up in their close purple buds; but the form of the ground, which sloped rapidly down to the margin of a brook, together with the multitude of stems and leafless bushes which covered the ground, would, he well knew, suffice to furnish the shelter he coveted. There was, too, one especial spot beside this stream, which had for years been his favourite day-bed; it was a little hollow nook, the sides of which were thickly lined with primroses "now in their newest gloss," and in this nook he was stretched at his length within five minutes after he had parted from his father.

Of the few modern poets which this strictly obedient pupil of the venerable Westbrook had been permitted to read, Beattie was decidedly the favourite: probably, because he was the only one with whom the wondrously-restricted

limits of his small experiences enabled him to feel a perfect sympathy. All that unnumbered novels are to the hearts and minds of fashionable young ladies and gentlemen, the few sweet pages of the minstrel were to him. Not a line did they contain, but had been repeated a hundred times within that selfsame nook where he had now taken refuge ; and whatever imputation of vanity may rest upon our hero in consequence of the avowal, it cannot be denied that the words,

“ Young Edwin was no vulgar boy,”

did perforce, and despite of all the modesty he sought to cherish, go to his very heart, and suggest an idea of such close resemblance to himself, as irresistibly, and at a very early age, had set him to try his skill upon the

“ One short pipe of rudest minstrelsy.”

This occupation had indeed now become so habitual, and so fascinating to him, that the idea of every other had long grown distasteful ; and at the time when the news of his most unexpected legacy reached his parents, they were

both suffering great anxiety, in common with their eldest son and his worthy wife, as to what mode of life they should get him to adopt which might enable him to contribute to his own support. As no child had blessed the union of Christopher and Susan, they naturally looked upon the young Charles, who was ten years his brother's junior, as the ultimate heir of the family acres; and gladly would they in some sort have adopted him as a son, and assured to him the continuance of an easy and comfortable existence under the paternal roof, had it not been too plainly evident, despite the boy's quiet and even submissive manners, that there was a vein of latent ambition within him, which would have rendered such a life utterly distasteful to him. Of the indulgent kindness of his family, and of his own feelings under it, he was quite as well aware as they were themselves; and many were the hours spent by him in solitary musings upon the possibility of his rising, by the strength of his own genius, above the humble and obscure position in which nature had placed him.

Mrs. Catherine Newton's legacy fell upon his spirit with all the brightness and, as it seemed to him, with all the sublimity of a ray direct from heaven. He felt himself called and chosen. Our "young Edwin," though "splendour he heeded not, nor gaud, nor toy," was destined by fate, as it seemed, to become one set apart by Providence from those amidst whom he was born, for hidden but doubtless high purposes, which in the fulness of time would be known and revealed to all.

There was something in this vague future inexpressibly delightful to Charles, accompanied as it was at this moment with the firm persuasion that he was secured for ever from the fear of being exposed to any pecuniary distress; and truly wise was he for having thus turned aside to enjoy, in all the perfection of solitude and repose, speculations so delicious. It was not till after an hour thus spent that he at length started from his couch of primroses and remembered his errand. His conscience gave him one little pinch of reproach, as he thought of the friend without whose aid the mental

powers of which he was so delightfully conscious might have been born to blush unseen within his father's orchard; he could hardly forgive himself for having preferred a communion with his own spirit, to conveying the news of his high fortune to his generous tutor, and he now hastened towards his abode with a heart overflowing with affection and gratitude.

In the conduct of Mr. Westbrook towards him, there had been indeed sufficient cause for both. Attracted quite as much by a look of delicate health, as by his pretty face and intelligent manner, the poor and forgotten, but learned and excellent vicar of Charlton had early taken a fancy to the boy, and finding him apt, affectionate, and gentle, had by degrees undertaken the task of his education for no other reward than the pleasure he found in it. Old Chesterfield, too proud of the learning thus bestowed upon his son, and too grateful for the manner in which it was done, to dream of challenging its usefulness, had gone on from

year to year, soothed by the assurance he received from many that his boy was a prodigy, till, when it was too late to help it, the whole family began to discover that poor Charles was a great deal too learned to be useful.

Mr. Westbrook, notwithstanding his long and complete seclusion from the world, would hardly, however, have held himself justified in thus deliberately unfitting the young man for the situation in which he was born, had not his mother, who doted on this gifted child of her old age, repeatedly taken occasion to assure him, that her Charles would never want for any thing, and moreover, that did he attempt to exert himself in the farm like his brother, his life would be endangered by it, as from infancy he had been much more like the delicate offspring of a nobleman than the hardy child of a farmer. Thus licensed to continue his very pleasant task, the idle scholar contrived to make his own existence and that of his young pupil exceedingly agreeable, by introducing him to a

really intimate and familiar acquaintance with the poets, philosophers, and historians of Greece and Rome; and having succeeded in this to his perfect satisfaction, entertained not the slightest notion that the young man was more profoundly ignorant of every thing else than the worst-taught grammar-school boy in the kingdom.

The old man was sitting on a sheltered bench in the south-west corner of his garden, with his hands crossed on his breast, and his eyes all but closed in sleep, when the rapid steps of Charles aroused him.

"Have I waked you, sir?" said the young man.

"No, Charles, no—I was not quite asleep, though very near it, I believe. I did not know you were coming back to me, my dear boy, or I would have had things ready for you."

"If *you* are ready," said Charles, gravely, "if you are ready to listen to me, my best and kindest friend, that is all I want—I have strange news for you, Mr. Westbrook, very

strange news indeed. I have had a fortune left to me, sir; a large fortune, as it seems to me—four thousand four hundred pounds! And I want your advice as to the manner of life that you think I ought to pursue.”

“I am most heartily rejoiced to hear it, Charles,” replied the good man; “the sum is fully sufficient to permit your going to college, and taking orders: a destination I have ever wished for you, my dear boy, though I have never hitherto advised it, from knowing—rather too well perhaps—that it is not favourable for a man’s happiness that he should enter the church without any other means of living, or of marrying, Charles, beyond what the profession affords. But the sum you mention is sufficient to assure you a moderate independence, with the help of a college living and I have little fear but that the result of your examination will be a scholarship.”

Charles listened with the most respectful attention; but when the old man ended, he

remained profoundly silent and, as it seemed, lost in thought.

“Do you not approve of this plan, my dear boy?” demanded Mr. Westbrook.

“I cannot explain, even to myself, what it is that makes my heart beat so!” replied the youth, with heightened colour and a trembling voice. “But, I do not think, I do not believe sir, that I have at this time any call to the ministry.”

“Then God forbid, Charles, I should urge the sacred calling upon you! I am not surprised that you should feel confused and puzzled by this unexpected change in your circumstances; and doubtless it would not be wise to decide on any thing so important till you are more quiet and composed. I am very much obliged to you, my dear boy, for coming so immediately to tell me this, and now I shall send you home again; for well can I guess that your good parents must part with you very unwillingly at such a moment. But I shall see you again to-morrow as usual, shall I not?”

By no means sorry for the *congée* which again left him to the paradise of his own thoughts, Charles readily promised to return on the morrow, and then once more plunged into the deepest covert that the neighbouring grounds could furnish. Charles Chesterfield revered his instructor, nay, he loved the old man sincerely, but at this moment he felt that there was a terrible lack of sympathy between them. In good truth, the going to college, and the taking orders, was a process that had no more resemblance to the day-dreams in which he had revelled on his bed of primroses, than the movements of the Lord Mayor's state coach to those of Taglioni. It was not a college, it was not a university, which he coveted as a scene of action. It was the world, it was London, for which he panted. Fame, renown, applause—applause, renown, and fame, such as he had heard tell of, even in the deep retreat of Charlton, as having been achieved by an individual called Sir Walter Scott, and by another named Lord Byron. These were men of whom he had often thought, though, as yet, he had never been

happy enough to fall in with a line from the pen of either ; but these were the sort of people, as he told himself, whose exertions he determined to emulate, and whose fame in his heart of hearts he hoped to equal. It was unfortunate, poor Charles felt it was very unfortunate, that his good old friend should have hit upon this notion of his going into the church ; for he thought it not at all unlikely that his father and mother might approve it, and in that case he should have many difficulties before him. The next hour or two, therefore, was spent by the ardent young man in fortifying his spirit against opposition, and in strengthening his mind into the determination of following all the noble and sublime ideas which his genius suggested to him, in spite of all that friends or kindred could urge to the contrary.

His good father, meanwhile, had been fortunate enough to find Sir George Meddows at home, and sitting alone in his library. Circumstances which eventually proved so favourable to the wishes of Charles, that he was

almost tempted to declare, when made acquainted with the facts, that his legacy would, in his eyes, have been of little value without them.

CHAPTER III.

A Man of the World—Talents for Business—Disinterested Friendship, and high-minded Condescension—Different Opinions—A Dinner-party.

“Do I disturb you, Sir George?” said Mr. Chesterfield, on perceiving that the baronet was sitting before a table covered with papers and accounts.

“Disturb me, neighbour!” replied Sir George, gaily. “If you do, upon my soul I am very much obliged to you: for a duller occupation than mine can hardly be devised by mortal man. Look here, Chesterfield; a pretty collection, are they not? However, thank my stars, I have settled all these,” he

continued, laying his hand on one, two, three, four thick packets neatly tied up in red tape.

“That’s a good thing, at any rate, Sir George,” replied the old man cheerily, and patting the closely stowed packets with very friendly satisfaction; an operation which he would probably have omitted, had he been aware that the only *settlement* they had received consisted in their having been all snugly tied up about ten minutes before by the illustrious fingers of the gentleman to whom they were addressed.

“Why, yes,” rejoined the baronet, “it is always a good job to set things in order. I rather pique myself, Chesterfield, on the style in which I get through the business. Few men get over the ground faster than I do. How are they all at home, Chesterfield? I have not seen any of you for these hundred years—not since last shooting-season, have I? I was devilishly vexed that I could not get down at Christmas, for I had made up my mind to give a general merry-making to every man, woman, and child on the estate. But it was quite im-

possible. In short, I was commanded another way, and could not help myself. But I swore then, that Easter should not pass without the kitchen-chimney's smoking at the Grange. Hospitality is hereditary among us, Chesterfield; I don't believe there's a family in the county that can beat us there."

"What, are the tenantry to have their Christmas feasting now, Sir George? That will please the lads and lasses, if it is only for the novelty of the thing."

"I am sorry to say that's out of the question just now, my good friend. The truth is, I have not an hour to spare; I came down, in short, merely to give an eye myself to all these sort of things" (pointing to the bills that covered the table), "and as soon as I have settled them all, I must be off again."

"Well then, Sir George, I must hold myself very lucky to have caught sight of you just for this minute; for I have a bit of news I want to tell you, Sir George, and maybe I may take the liberty of asking your advice."

"And I have not a friend in the world to

whom I could give it more readily, Chesterfield. You know how heartily I esteem you, and how firmly I trust in your honour and integrity at all times—I should never have borrowed money from you, Chesterfield, if I had not.”

“Don’t name that, Sir George. I am proud and happy to have served your father’s son. My news, Sir George, will give you pleasure, I think, because you have always taken so much notice of my boy Charles; and this morning I received a letter by the post informing me that old Mrs. Catherine Newton, of Fairlybery, who was the boy’s godmother, is just dead, and has bequeathed to him, by her last will and testament, four thousand four hundred pounds, and a splendid diamond ring.”

“God bless my soul, Chesterfield! you don’t say so? What a delicious windfall! Tax provided for, and a diamond into the bargain! What in the world, my good fellow, do you mean to do with it?” was the baronet’s reply.

“Why, there is nothing can be done with it at present, Sir George, because the boy wants

seven or eight months of being of age, and, of course, it must lie in government securities till then. But what I want your counsel about, Sir George, is what we had best be thinking of doing with the boy. As a child, his mother fancied he was always ailing, and therefore he has been let to give more time to his learning (which was the only thing he took delight in) than was perhaps quite fitting in his condition. But this pretty independence sets all that right, and with learning and money both, there is no reason in life why he should not make himself a gentleman. Do you think there is, Sir George?"

"None upon earth, my good friend, none upon earth. It is, in fact, the only situation he must think of. I tell you what, Chesterfield, I would do more for you than for any man living—I would upon my soul! When a service has been done me, I never forget it—I would rather be burned alive, and have my worthless cinders scattered to the four winds of heaven! But enough of this, my good friend. You understand me. You read my heart, every

inch of it, I know you do. Now hear me. If my own brother had a son exactly in the same situation, there is but one thing I could do for him, and that is to invite him to go with me and my family to London. There your boy's remarkable talents will be sure so bring him forward. I remember every word his excellent mother told me about his extraordinary faculty of making verses. At the present moment there is nothing which so certainly leads to fortune, and I should not mind betting a thousand to one, that if you will trust Charles with me in London, he will become one of the most celebrated young men of the day, and probably an author of very high distinction."

"Indeed, Sir George, your goodness and condescension takes me so by surprise, that I hardly know how to answer you," said the greatly flattered yeoman. "You must be pleased to have the goodness to let his mother and me have some short space of time to think about it. But let what will come of it, we must ever feel beholden to your generous kindness."

"Don't mention it, my good friend. Your

vote and your friendship are well worth such a mark of neighbourly kindness in return. But as to hurrying you, I would not do it for the world. Unfortunately, it is absolutely impossible for me to delay our return to town beyond Monday; but if you and your dear boy will dine with us on Sunday, we shall be able to settle all about it."

"Many thanks, Sir George; but we old-fashioned folks never dine out of a Sunday," said the good man, gently.

"True, true, my good Chesterfield—admirable, admirable regulation! I have no words to express how deeply I esteem you for it! Would to heaven my own position was one to allow me to follow such an example! But stern necessity forbids this, and I can only venerate the practice, without hoping, at the present moment, to be able strictly to adopt it. Saturday, let it be then, my worthy neighbour. Do you and your young son come and dine with us on Saturday, and then I trust that the pleasant scheme I have sketched for his advantage will be finally decided on."

Having said these words in the most cordial and friendly accents, Sir George Meddows rose from his chair, which was, of course, a signal that old Chesterfield should rise too, which he accordingly did, and, after receiving a very affectionate shake of the hand, took his leave, ruminating during his homeward walk upon the amiable character of his aristocratic neighbour, and deciding, in his own mind, that, spite of all which folks might say about his gay living and extravagance, he certainly had one of the most friendly hearts that ever a gentleman was blessed with.

Punctual to her appointment, little Bessy was lingering under the shelter of an avenue of old elms, outside Sir George Meddows's park-gates, and, on seeing her old friend pass through them, she hastened to meet him.

"You have not made a very long visit, grand-papa," said she, "I suppose our grand neighbour was too busy to talk much about Charles?"

"You wrong him, Bessy. He was very busy when I went in, and about things that I should be sorry to interrupt; for it was just the work

that his best friends would desire to see him at. He was going over his accounts, my dear, and had just been settling a heavy quantity of bills: but that was done before I went in, so, thank goodness, I did not stop that good work. But as to his not finding time to talk about Charles, you are quite out there, Bessy; for if the dear boy had been his own natural blood relation, he could not have seemed to take more interest in him."

"Every body loves Charles," responded Bessy.

"Yes, that's true, too; there is a great deal of kind feeling for the boy, and no great wonder, for he never puts himself in any body's light, and is always easy and civil to every one. But the kindness of Sir George goes greatly beyond what any of us could have hoped or expected, Bessy. Would you believe it, my dear, he wants Charles to set off with him to London directly, that he may introduce him, and make a gentleman of him, as he says, suitable to his talents and his fortune."

“And will Charles go, sir?” inquired little Bessy anxiously.

“I can’t answer that, my dear child,” replied the old man. “It seems to me to require a good deal of consideration. Yet, after all, I doubt if Charles himself ought not to be the only person to decide.”

“Then he won’t go, I’m very sure,” said Bessy, eagerly.

“And what makes you think that, my dear?” replied the old man, stopping short, and looking earnestly in her face.

Bessy coloured a little, but answered without much hesitation, “Oh! because I don’t think he would like to leave all his old friends.”

“Well, we shall see, Bessy. I feel as if my old head was turned, and if his young one keeps steady under it all, I shall wonder.”

On arriving at home, they found that Christopher, the good man’s eldest son, and as fine a specimen of an honest, honourable, frank-hearted English farmer as could be found between John o’Groat’s house and the Land’s

End, was returned, and was still listening, while a dish of eggs-and-bacon grew cold before him, to the wonderful history of the morning.

“God bless you, dear father !” said the young man, starting up, as soon as his parent entered. “This news that Susan and my mother have been telling me is excellent for us all ; but it is for your sake I rejoice the most, for it is from you it will remove the most anxiety. Poor Charles, he may love learning as much as he likes now, father, there is no danger of its proving a snare to him.”

“And I was not the only one that was anxious about him, Kit,” answered the old man, with an expressive pressure of the hand he held. “But where is the dear boy ? We ought to be altogether now, both for the pleasure of looking in each other’s faces, and seeing all the happiness they show, and because I have got something new to tell you all.”

“Something new, husband !” exclaimed Mrs. Chesterfield, eagerly ; “and you coming from the Grange ? God bless you, man, we can’t wait

for Charles—can we, children? Speak it out Thomas—tell it at once.”

“Well then, Christopher must give me a cup of his ale, and I will. Sit down, all of you, and you shall hear what I have got to say, which truly may be told twice over without any fear of your being tired of listening; for, maybe, you must hear it more than once, or twice either, before you will either understand or believe it.”

After this preface, Mr. Chesterfield, having seated himself between his wife and son, recounted to them very faithfully all the kind things Sir George Meddows had spoken concerning Charles; his proposal that the young man should accompany the family to London; his great hopes for his brilliant literary success, and finally the dinner invitation for Saturday.

“It never rains, but it pours!” exclaimed Mrs. Chesterfield.

“God help the dear boy!” said Susan; “it is enough to turn his head, coming all togetherso.”

“Poor Charles!” murmured little Bessy; “I am quite sure that if he has got his own way, he will never go to live in London.”

The heir of the Chesterfield acres took a draught of ale, wiped his mouth, and said nothing.

"You talk like a fool, Bessy," said the old lady, giving herself an impatient jerk; "I should like to know how you can tell what he will, and what he won't do?"

"There is nobody knows him so well as I do, granny," replied the unsuspecting girl. "It is always to me that he talks of his poetry and his stories; I don't believe he says a word about it to any body but me—no, not even to Mr. Westbrook—about the last beautiful story; I am sure he has not, because he told me so himself—and that is the reason why I think I can make a good guess about what he will like, and what he won't like—and he won't like going to London, and leaving the flowers and the birds—the running brooks, and the nightingales, and the moon. I am as sure as if he were here, and told us so himself, that if he follows his own wishes, he will not go to London."

“If he follows mine, he won’t go, I’ll own that much,” said Christopher, breaking silence; “though I should be loath to interfere with giving advice that should vex him. What I should like for him, wouldn’t be going to London; but glad and proud should I be if he would spend some of his money in getting himself made a parson. That’s all head-work and heart-work, and wouldn’t try his strength any way that could hurt him. And then, you know, our good Mr. Westbrook might have him for a curate; and think what a pleasure for Charles to help him in his old age. And he wouldn’t want to be paid either, having such plenty of money himself, and always living here the same as he does now. That is what I should call a happy scheme, and a safe one.”

The parents looked at each other; and it required no very profound knowledge of physiognomy to perceive that the suggestion of their eldest son, respecting his brother, was highly agreeable to them. But Bessy, on hearing these words of wisdom, could by no means

restrain her approbation of them to any such silent demonstrations, but suddenly running to her uncle, she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed once and again the broad high forehead, from which the closely-curling brown hair was already receding.

“Charles has no need of knights, nor baronets either, to advise him what he ought to do, as long as he has got such a brother as you, uncle Christopher,” said she, leaning over the back of his chair, and fondly resting a hand on either shoulder. “You won’t send him to the great house, will you, grandfather, to learn what he is to do with his money?”

Susan smiled, and gave a very approving wink and nod, at hearing her own sentiments thus freely and fearlessly proclaimed by her young relative; while the old Mrs. Chesterfield, who approved what she had uttered much less than the young one, knit her brows, and fidgeted in her chair, very plainly evincing that every word she had uttered was in direct contradiction to her own opinion. And, in fact, Bessy looked so animated, and so very pretty

as she spoke, that the old lady felt all her terrors return lest the lowly little maiden should entrap the affections or the fancy of her highly-gifted son, and thereby cause him to neglect all the opportunities which were likely to fall in his way, for still further improving his fortune by means of a wealthy and honourable marriage. This idea tormented her dreadfully, and in this, the very first day of her darling's good fortune, went far towards neutralizing all the happiness it ought to have brought her.

The old man, however, having "no such stuff in his thoughts," listened to the little girl with very affectionate approbation, and said,

"You could not speak more sensibly, my dear, if you was twice as old, and though I shall never, as long as ever I live, forget the kindness and condescension of Sir George Meddows at this most critical moment of our dear boy's life, I can't but say that little Bessy is right, and that we have no need to look further than our own good, sound-headed Christopher for an adviser."

"And yet, father, though I believe in the

main we all think much the same upon the subject of Charles's going to London, it would go sadly against me to be set forward as the one that put the first spoke in his wheel, if so be he has set his mind upon going. It would look for all the world as if I was envious of his doing and seeing more than the rest of us. So you must not mind one single bit what I said about making him a parson, if it turns out that he has got no mind for it."

"As to his being made a parson, Christopher, and a dean, and a bishop, when the proper time comes for it, neither Charles himself, nor any body else, can possibly see any thing to find fault with in it," said Mrs. Chesterfield. "But that's no rule, as I can see, why he shouldn't go to London, too, and cultivate the goodwill and familiarity of such-like people as the Meddows family. For how is he to be known to the queen, or the lord chancellor, or any of those sort of people, if he never goes to London? and that's the only way, as we have heard Mr. Westbrook say over and over, for a person to get on in the church. So my say is, Chris-

topher, that he should do the very thing you advise, and yet not make his mind up neither, to break straight away from all the friendship and honour* that Sir George seems ready to offer him."

Farmer Chesterfield smiled with considerable satisfaction at the various proofs of worldly ignorance which this speech evinced; but as the smile was much more good-humoured than sarcastic, it did no harm; and as Bessy returned to her place beside her aunt Susan, and took no further part in the conversation, the discussion proceeded in the most amicable manner possible, and was only interrupted from time to time by an exclamation of surprise, that Charles should stay so very long with Mr. Westbrook.

The sun had set, and the soft twilight of a fine April evening was rapidly growing dim, when at length the glass-door of the closet was again heard to open, and the minute afterwards Charles stood amongst the party who were so eagerly expecting him. If instead of having been meditating on his great good fortune, the young man had passed the hours since they

parted in struggling to support manfully some heavy sorrow, he could hardly have presented to his friends a countenance more pale and careworn.

The hearty, and truly fraternal congratulations of Christopher seemed, however, to rouse him from the state of languor and exhaustion into which he had fallen; his young eye kindled anew at the fair prospects opening before him, and once more a smile of hope and happiness chased the anxious thoughtfulness that had appeared to have settled on his brow.

“How glad I am to have you back again Charley!” said his mother. “I thought we should have had to go to the Vicarage to look for you. Why, my dear boy, you have staid long enough to settle what you are to do every year of your life, if you live to a hundred. What did the good man say to it, Charles?”

Greatly relieved by this concluding question, the answering which enabled him to pass over the former portion of his mother’s speech in silence, Charles replied, “That his old friend

was as much delighted by the good news as she herself could be."

"No doubt of it, no doubt of it," said his father. "But there is more news yet to talk of before we go to bed, Charles; before you hear it, though, I should like to know what good Mr. Westbrook said about your plans for the future. Did he speak his notions, Charles, as to what he thought it would be best for you to take to, by way of a calling and manner of life?"

A flush of embarrassment dyed the cheeks and the brow of the young man with crimson. But the truth must be told, and while he nerved himself to utter it, he nerved himself also to endure with the unshrinking firmness of a stoic the burst of approval which in his heart of hearts he felt quite sure would follow the statement of Mr. Westbrook's suggestion.

Every eye was fixed on him, but it was that of Bessy only which discerned in his heightened colour something that was neither eagerness nor joy, nor yet timidity. She was quite sure that whatever Mr. Westbrook had proposed had

been something very different from what his pupil desired to hear from him ; and when, after a moment's delay, Charles replied, "Mr. Westbrook thinks I should do well to get ordained," she felt as certain that the proposal was distasteful to him, as if she had been the sharer of all the soaring, wild, and ambitious thoughts which had been chasing each other through his fevered brain during the last two hours.

To know and to feel this, was quite sufficient to produce the most complete revolution in all her own views of the subject. Ten minutes before, the idea of *Charles Chesterfield's being made a clergyman*, appeared the very highest flight to which her affectionate ambition for him could reach : but no sooner did her mind receive the conviction that such a destination would be contrary to his own wishes, than with the rapidity of magic, the whole aspect of the thing became changed both to her judgment and her inclination. The little girl did in truth love Charles Chesterfield a thousand fathoms

deeper than she had any notion of ; and yet she was quite aware that she loved him much, fully as well, she was sure, as if he had been her own brother, instead of only her cousin by marriage, and quite enough to make her know for a certainty, that it would be very wrong and very cruel to contradict his wishes, or control his will.

A great deal has been said and sung about "young love," yet a great deal more, all vastly new and original, remains to be said and sung. As no two forms or faces are exactly alike, so neither, in all philosophic probability, are any two human hearts. And herein lies the best excuse I know of for the ceaseless continuity of narratives of which this busy organ is the theme. Not any other one of the deeply interested group who heard Charles's reply to his mother's question, though they were all more or less sharp and intelligent, derived from it any information whatever as to his own feelings on the subject. They all observed that he was somewhat agitated, but in this even there was no cause for wonder.

“And what said you to the good man in return?” demanded old Chesterfield.

“Father! I could say nothing certain,” replied the young man. “I must have more time to think before I shall be able to say what I would or what I would not be.”

“True, my dear, very true. I like to hear you speak so wisely, and it is the more necessary, Charles, because you will immediately have to decide, my dear boy, between plans so exceedingly different from one another, that beyond all doubt you will have need of your very best steadiness and reflection to decide which will suit you best. I won’t deny, Charles, that I believe we in the old farmhouse-parlour here shall all think one way; but that’s no argument against your having an opinion of your own, you know; and so now I will tell you what Sir George Meddows says about it.”

Little did Charles Chesterfield think, as his father pronounced these words, that they pre-
faced intelligence infinitely more important to him in his own estimation than any which had hitherto met his ears throughout that eventful

day; and it was with a feeling of restored composure, arising from the belief that the agitation in which he had passed the last few hours was now to be exchanged for a state of very calm indifference, that he prepared to listen to his father's statement of what it might have been Sir George Meddows's pleasure to say, on hearing of the legacy which had been bequeathed to him.

It would be difficult to find any words, not liable to be stigmatized as hyperbolical, capable of doing justice to the emotions which Mr. Chesterfield's narrative produced on his young son. The gates of an earthly paradise seemed opening before him. Sober reason was for the moment utterly upset, and though the wish and the power to express all he felt were equally distant from him, there was a flashing of the eye, and a smile upon the lip, that once more taught poor little Bessy to understand him.

Those who professionally study the operations of the human intellect declare, that the first and surest symptoms of a distempered wit may be

traced in the capricious incongruity of the affections. According to this test, Charles Chesterfield was at this moment decidedly mad, for all that had hitherto been dearest, seemed suddenly to become indifferent and even distasteful to him. A mysterious sanctity, indeed, appeared to envelop his father and mother, which hanging round them like a veil of holiness kept them safe and apart from the wild havoc that vanity was making with less sacred feelings. But when Susan uttered some little affectionate domestic phrase, indicative of the comfort of family union, his heart seemed turned to marble. His brother's friendly voice aroused within him a spirit of opposition, for no other reason than that the tones were those of reason, and therefore likely enough to be hostile to the wild schemes already conceived, and already dearer to him than all the relations in the world. And as for little Bessy, he looked at her soft eye and blushing cheek with a feeling little short of terror, for he was conscious that he had of late become aware how greatly she surpassed in beauty every other girl of the neighbourhood :

he was conscious, too, that her innocent prattle had sometimes won him both from his pen and his book, and the idea that it would be a pang to part with her, and that this pang *might* some day be too strong to bear, caused him to shudder at the very thought of loving her, and added another quill to the species of *chevaux-de-frise* by which he was beginning to surround himself. All, in short, which at that critical moment of his existence seemed good and gracious in his eyes lay enshrined in the velvet words of Sir George Meddows, as repeated to him by his father. He dared not trust his voice to express the feelings they inspired, for full well he knew that none who heard would understand them, and so strong was the effort he made to speak with a composure which he did not feel, that he greatly over-acted the part he attempted to assume, and replied in accents that seemed to denote the most profound indifference,

“It is very obliging of him.”

“Well done, Charles!” said Susan, laughing, “much he seems to care for it, doesn’t he?”

“To be sure he cares for it, and is grateful too, as for certain he ought to be,” said Mr. Chesterfield, addressing his daughter-in-law a little with the air of a reprimand. “It is likely enough that there are other things Charles may like better than a journey to London, but that’s no reason he shouldn’t be thankful for the offer. You’ll be proud to dine with Sir George, won’t you, my boy?”

“Yes, father,” replied the young man, once more colouring to the temples, “I shall like to go.”

Having said thus much, Charles attempted no further conversation, and by degrees the spirits of the whole party seemed to flag, despite the determination to be particularly gay and happy which they had expressed to each other a short time before.

“I do believe that we are all tired out with our gladness!” said Bessy, looking anxiously at Charles.

“And that’s no way impossible, little one,” replied the old man, glad, as it should seem,

at having their drooping spirits so satisfactorily accounted for; "so I vote for our all eating our supper and going to bed, without talking any more of our happiness."

CHAPTER IV.

Charles Chesterfield proves himself to be not altogether a Stoic—His Mother alone understands his Feelings—He Dines at the Grange, and his Journey to London is settled—The News is announced to his assembled Family as they sit in their Porch by Moonlight—Leave-taking and Departure.

As the important Saturday was at the distance of four days from that on which the above events occurred, it might seem that there was time enough for the family of Charles to find out what his real sentiments and opinions were respecting the different modes of life which had been suggested to him. Yet it was not so. Throughout the whole of this time his affections were waging perpetual war against his imagina-

tion. There were moments when he felt that he hated himself for the species of cold palsy of the heart of which he was conscious ; but, comparatively speaking, these moments were but few and far between, for greatly the larger portion of the time was past in a sort of inward ecstasy, during which NOTHING could have had power to compete with the wildly ambitious hopes which filled his soul. Yet common sense had not so utterly forsaken him as not to leave a vague consciousness that to all others, save his inspired self alone, the hopes he was feeding on would seem absurd. He carefully enclosed them therefore in the most secret cells of his heart, and like a miser gloating over his unsunned treasure, or a lover taking stolen glances at the portrait of one beloved in mystery, his emotions were all the stronger for being unwitnessed and unshared.

Every member of his family, and his friendly instructor into the bargain, saw and felt that he was changed, but each one of them had a different theory as to the nature of the change. His father thought that some notion of the

chance which had befallen him bringing with it the necessity of giving up his idle habits for a mode of life enforcing greater activity, caused the heaviness that seemed to rest upon his spirits. Christopher thought that he was terrified at the idea of going forth into the world, and that all the peculiarity they witnessed arose from mere shyness, which would soon wear off. Susan believed that the poor fellow was so overcome by all that had happened to him, as to be positively ill, and, could she have had her way, would have obliged him to swallow sundry drugs to tranquillize his spirits, and set his system "to rights," as she called it. Mr. Westbrook, good man, had no doubt but that the words he had spoken to him, on first hearing of his good fortune, had sunk deep into his heart, and that he was now meditating with all the humility and self-doubtingness which became a christian, on the important subject of ordination. Poor little Bessy, half broken-hearted herself at the sad change which it was easy to see must soon take place in their hitherto happy mode of life, could not persuade herself to doubt that Charles

must feel unhappy too, and this accounted very satisfactorily, in her estimation, both for his not liking to go to college, and not looking happy and light-hearted when London was talked of either.

The only individual of the party who had the slightest notion of what was really working within him, was his mother; a fact which would have greatly disturbed some of former Chesterfield's most carefully drawn conclusions respecting females in general, and his well-beloved wife in particular. But so it was, and the fact is easily explained, by remembering that of all those who sat in judgment on the symptoms he betrayed, she alone had any sympathy with the feeling in which they originated. Mrs. Chesterfield was, in truth, as vain of the intellectual talents of her younger son as he could be himself; her ambition for him was as unbounded, her hopes as extravagant. And though the old woman's substantial imaginings took no form more brilliant; or more fanciful, than that he should receive a prodigious quantity of honour and glory from the great scholars of

London, and that, if it was not his own fault he would make a great marriage with some beautiful lady, as rich, or it may be, a great deal richer than himself ; still, when she marked his absent eye, and saw him start as one awakened from a dream, when his attention was forcibly called outward from contemplating the gorgeous scenes exhibiting by his fancy within, she guessed, with a very satisfactory approach to the truth, whereabouts his thoughts had been wandering.

The same mother-wit, too, which taught her this, likewise taught her that no good would be done by endeavouring to explain to those who did not understand him, what it was that Charles was thinking about ; and, therefore, when any of the family remarked in her presence upon what caused so much speculation, she only shook her head, or shrugged her shoulders, and if she spoke at all, it was only to say “ Dear boy ! ”

Yet notwithstanding this excellent sympathy between them, Mrs. Chesterfield was not at all aware that though by day her darling wore an aspect of perfectly inactive meditation, he was

during several hours of every night most busily engaged in arranging all his little possessions for leaving his home on the following Monday, in company with Sir George Meddows and his family. Having determined not to declare his resolution of accepting the baronet's invitation till after the visit of Saturday, he steadily kept to it, and thereby lost the essential services of his mother in making his preparations. But his father had dwelt a good deal upon the difficulty of his being ready by this Monday, and likewise on the positive manner in which Sir George had declared that on that day he *must* perforce set off; which so terrified the youth lest his glorious hopes should be frustrated by the necessity of any delay on his part, that all his books, and all his hoarded compositions, all his best apparel, and all the little articles with which he had been indulged in compliance with his literary wishes, such as a writing-desk, portfolio, and so on, were all secretly put in marching order, and perfectly ready to start at an hour's notice. As the young man's personal habits were indolent, and putting things in good

order by no means one of his accomplishments, these circumstances, trifling as they are, serve to show the strength of the impulse which inspired him.

Charles had twice before dined at the table of Sir George Meddows ; but it was only when he was inhabiting the Grange without the ladies of his family, and when the sole object of the invitation had been to prove to farmer Chesterfield that the prosperity of the country depended upon his giving his vote and interest, at an approaching election, in direct opposition to the manner in which he had been led, by the same patriotic interest, to give it at the last. So that Charles's part in the business had been confined to eating as much fruit, and drinking rather more wine, than he liked : which luxuries were thus liberally bestowed upon him for the purpose of proving Sir George's very strong attachment to the Chesterfield family.

Great, in all ways, was the difference between his former visits and the present one. Instead of being shown into the library on arriving, it was to the drawing-room that his father and

himself were led; and though quite as sensible as most other rustic youths to the dazzling effects of a handsome apartment, seen for the first time, Charles had scarcely passed the door before he became aware that sofas and ottomans, mirrors and candelabras, were not of necessity the most imposing objects that a fine drawing-room could contain. Seated on the same sofa, at the upper end of the apartment, were two ladies, much more decidedly unlike any thing he had ever before looked upon, than any other objects which met his eyes. These ladies were the sister and the daughter of Sir George Meddows. Mrs. Longuéville, the sister, was the widow of a French officer of distinction, who had, however, left her nothing but his name, and the right to claim, as near relations by marriage, many of the old aristocracy of France. Her own fortune of ten thousand pounds had been carefully secured to her by settlement, when their showy, but unprofitable, marriage was formed; and on the interest of this she lived, with the assistance either of Sir George's house for her home, or of such

an allowance for receiving his motherless daughter and only child into her family, as had enabled her to support a very tolerable appearance in Paris during the last three or four years, for about six months in each year.

Clara Meddows, her niece, at the age of twenty-two, possessed that perfect and finished air of high fashion which is certainly never acquired *more* thoroughly than by those whom circumstances have thrown into intimate association with the best society in Paris. This young lady's position had moreover given her the advantage of an intimate connexion with many of the same distinguished class in England; and, in addition to this, nature had bestowed upon her great personal beauty, to which education had added all the graces which well-taught accomplishments can bestow. The quality of her intellect, and the peculiarities of her temper and disposition, will be more satisfactorily developed by the following narrative, than by description.

There are very many pretty young women of two-and-twenty, who, even when placed by

fortune in a situation greatly superior to that of the majority who gaze upon them, inspire more admiration than awe. But unfortunately for Charles, this was not the case with Miss Meddows. Her beauty was of the kind in which the most rustic perceive fashion; the most conceited, superiority; and the most presumptuous, dignity. Tall and perfectly well formed, though, as yet, extremely slight; with a clear brown, but pale, complexion, raven hair, magnificent black eyes, a straight nose, and that short-lipped Grecian mouth which best displays a set of well-ranged pearly teeth, Clara Meddows could no more have been mistaken for a lowly-born, or lowly-bred young lady, than a first-rate race-horse for the short-legged round pony that draws to his stable-door the litter of which his bed is made.

Mr. Chesterfield "louted low" to the two ladies, and, Sir George not being in presence, seated himself, without speaking, on the first chair he came to that was set out for use. Charles stood perfectly still for a minute or two after he entered the room, and then sidled

to a window, where, with a sudden feeling of timidity, he confessed to himself that not even the conscious superiority of genius could, at first sight, make a man feel perfectly at ease with persons he was quite unused to. Meanwhile, the two ladies not only bowed very graciously, but the elder one condescended to hope that Mrs. Chesterfield and all the family were in good health, adding, that she perfectly remembered going to drink tea at Maplebury farm when a girl, and recollected quite well Mr. Chesterfield's eldest boy's great good-nature in gathering vast quantities of cowslips, and tying them up in balls for her. This interesting theme lasted till Sir George made his appearance, when the hero of the party was drawn forth from the retreat afforded by the sheltering draperies of the window-curtains, and led by the most condescending good-humour not only to endure the sound of his own voice, but to remember, though at first not very distinctly, why it was that he found himself in that honourable presence.

“ My dear Charles ! I am delighted to see

you!" exclaimed the cordial baronet, shaking his hand for a period unusually long, and gazing in his face the while with a good deal of real as well as of affected interest. "How immensely you are grown since I last saw you! And so wonderfully improved too, Mr. Chesterfield, in all ways. I really wish you joy of your son, quite as much as of his unexpected good fortune."

Mr. Chesterfield smiled, looked greatly pleased, and replied with modest sincerity, that he certainly did think the kind old lady's money might have been worse bestowed.

"Upon my soul, Chesterfield, I should find it difficult to say where it could have been bestowed better. We all know that from his earliest childhood, Charles has shown abilities of no common order; but I will cordially confess to you that I did not expect a manner and appearance so perfectly gentlemanlike."

Charles Chesterfield raised his eyes from the ground, and looking Sir George full in the face, took measure of him in his heart, as the type and model of a man of consummate wisdom

and judgment. "While such approve me," thought the young man, "I ought to fear nothing;" and as the cheering idea arose within him, he ventured for the second time since he had entered the room to turn his eyes towards Miss Meddows.

The exceeding beauty which had seemed as it were to startle and almost terrify him at his first glance, did not appear diminished at the second; yet there was something in the expression of her features which did not please him. It was not pride; for though no one, not even the uninitiated Charles, could doubt the power of that lofty brow to dart a glance of very killing scorn, if she so willed, yet the aspect she now wore could not be mistaken for it. She looked annoyed, vexed, and almost sad, but there was no haughtiness.

"There is but one thing wanting," resumed Sir George, as he and his guests seated themselves; "but one thing wanting, Chesterfield, to make this young man's good fortune a real blessing to himself and his family. I have not forgotten my offer, nor changed my

mind respecting it, and I am quite ready to take him with me to London on Monday. I know all the first literary characters in town; he shall be introduced to them all, and a few months will suffice to settle the question as to whether it will be desirable for him to attempt publishing any thing he has written."

As these words were spoken, Charles again looked up, and again his eyes rested on the speaking features of Clara. A frown, a positive unmistakeable frown, contracted her beautiful brow, and a movement of the head so slight as to be observed by none but himself, indicated as plainly as if she had spoken it, that she did not approve the plan.

Here was a mystery which, while it made his cheeks tingle and his heart beat from the fear that it might involve something hostile to his wishes, gave the young lady an interest in his eyes beyond any that beauty could have inspired. It is probable that she observed the intensity of attention with which the young man regarded her, and possibly interpreted with tolerable correctness the feelings which caused

his cheeks to glow ; for the frown relaxed into a radiant smile, as she met his eye, and she said in the most amiable accent imaginable—"Mr. Charles Chesterfield may find publishers enough in London if he wishes to present himself before the public. There can be no doubt of it. But do you not think, papa, that the cause of literature would be better promoted by his remaining amidst the inspiring scenes where his genius was born? I can hardly imagine any process so likely to destroy the youthful freshness of a poetic mind, as the being dragged from the country to the town."

"What an extremely pastoral idea, my dear Clara!" replied her father, laughing; "I should scarcely have expected from you any thing so prodigiously sentimental. I am sorry I cannot agree with you, fair daughter; but unless you would seriously recommend to our young friend here the regular pipe and crook vein, and teach him to emulate the immortal Shenstone, I am greatly afraid your advice will contribute more to his oblivion than his fame. Is Miss Med-

dows right, Charles, in supposing that you are of the Arcadian school ?”

“ I have written some few lines, sir, after the manner of Theocritus,” replied the young man, blushing, while a shy smile acted upon one corner of his mouth, and a nervous twitching upon the other : “ but I by no means wish to confine myself to this style of composition ; on the contrary, I—”

Here the drawing-room door was thrown widely open, and the ever welcome apparition of the nuncio of the sideboard pronounced DINNER in a tone which might have silenced B., himself, though in the very act of giving a catalogue *raisonné* of his productions.

“ That’s well !—I have ridden twenty miles this morning,” said Sir George, giving his arm to his sister. “ But please to remember, most erudite Clara,” he added, with a laughing nod to his daughter, “ that whatever civilities Charles Chesterfield may be inclined to bestow upon the interesting little specimen of our *moutons* which he may find on the table, it is not

his intention to devote his life to becoming the chronicler of their exploits in our flowery meads."

At dinner Mr. Chesterfield, senior, sat by the young lady, while his son, the sole occupant of the opposite side of the table, enjoyed the doubtful advantage of having her dark eyes frequently directed towards him. He was not destined, however, to be either charmed or chilled by the expression of her countenance ; for Sir George Meddows, always animated at table, seemed determined to devote the lively spirits which rarely failed him there, to the edification and amusement of his *protégé* ; and Charles sipped the often-pledged wine and listened to his lively, hope-inspiring host, till a dozen pair of black eyes might have flashed upon him without the slightest danger of his being embarrassed thereby.

It was not, often perhaps, that the eloquence of the father could so completely throw the beauty of the daughter into the shade ; but on this occasion, the success of Sir George went further still, for it thrust little Bessy as entirely

out of the young man's thoughts, as if he had never in his life been awake to meditate upon her soft eyes and gentle smile, and made him feel so thoroughly convinced that he was destined to immortalize himself by his pen, that he would have considered the yielding to any feeling which might have turned him from the pursuit, as a manifest flying in the face of Providence.

"It is in vain, Charles," said the amiable baronet, as he prepared to turn his plate into a miniature laboratory, for the exquisitely delicate chemical process by which he brought his composite fish-sauce to perfection; "it is vain to struggle against nature, when she declares herself so decidedly as she has done in your case. Your mother has explained to me the nature of your talent exactly. It shows itself, does it not, my dear fellow, in a constant propensity to composition? Scribble, scribble, scribble all day, and then you are happy—that's it—you need not tell me—I have studied man, studied him deeply, Charles, and when any thing so decidedly marked as your talent for writing

comes before me, I will defy all the art of man to conceal it from me. Come, confess, I have found you out, haven't I ?”

“I cannot deny it, Sir George,” replied the blushing tyro; “you know me as well, nay, perhaps better than I do myself. But in truth, I can say, that there is, at least, one thing certain. If I cannot write, Sir George, I can do nothing.”

“I know it—I am perfectly convinced of it,” replied his eager new friend; “and mark me, Charles, you will find *that* to be the case through life.—Give me a small plate with cucumber, Norman.—You will find through life, that when once a man gives himself up to the divine enchantments of the muse, no matter whether in prose or verse, my dear boy, he never will, nor ever can be, good for any thing else.”

“And if he has the happiness to succeed, Sir George,” returned the youth, his eye flashing, and his whole countenance glowing with all sorts of inspiration: “if this greatest of all earthly joys be his, can those who love him,

wish for any thing better ? I should be grieved at heart to do any thing that my friends might not approve ;” and here Charles gave a furtive glance towards his father, who, however, saw it not, being altogether occupied by eating heartily, and listening, at the same time, to much that Mrs. Longuéville was kind enough to address to him. “I would give up almost any thing rather than vex them ; but in this case I am sure it would not answer.”

“To be sure it would not—you need not finish—I know perfectly well what you were going to say—it would be your ruin, and their ruin, and every body’s ruin—it is not to be thought of for a moment: so, on Monday morning, my dear fellow, I shall contrive a place for you in the carriage, or on the carriage, somewhere or other, and to London you shall go, where my house shall be your home, till you can suit yourself with some snug little lodging near us. And now, take a glass of champagne with me, Charles. The thing is settled, and we will say no more about it till the ladies are gone, and then I will tell your good father that you

have given me your answer, and there will be no more difficulties in your way, depend upon it."

Charles took the sparkling draught, and felt as he did so, that hope was changed into certainty, that all doubts and fears had turned their backs upon him and fled, and that it would now be his own fault if all the darling dreamy wishes of his ambitious heart were not satisfied.

His father, meanwhile, was undergoing pretty nearly a similar process, by the aid of Mrs. Longuéville's condescending affability. That is to say, she was doing all in her power to comply with the rather pointed request of her brother, that she would not suffer farmer Chesterfield to perceive that she thought him a bore.

"You know, my dear Amelia," he had said to her during a short *tête-à-tête* before they parted to dress for dinner; "you know that it is sometimes in the power of these kind of people to be very useful to one, and neither you nor I are such fools as to quarrel with our bread-and-butter, even if it should happen to come out of a farmhouse. As I think it worth my while to have them dining here, the bore, you know,

cannot be altogether escaped, and it will give you no more trouble to be civil, than to be rude."

"Say no more, George," replied his accomplished sister; "when people can, will, or may be useful, I have not to learn to-day that it is worth while to be civil to them. Only tell me the proper vein, and the conversation shall not flag. Agriculture? Politics? or Religion? From the dairy to Downing-street—from St. Paul's to St. Peter's—from his own fireside to the castle at Windsor, I will undertake to hold him in discourse till you blow your nose, and flourish your handkerchief according to the law in such cases known and provided."

"Thank you, Amelia," he replied; "I know full well that you can not only do all this, but more too; and therefore on the present occasion, strange as it may seem, I will request you to select literature as your theme. Not that it will be necessary to enter into any critical discussions. Merely tell the old gentleman that there is nothing in our family so greatly valued as literary talent—I will not keep you at it long. The flourish you speak of, shall be performed

as soon as you have taken your usual quantity of wine."

"Upon this hint she spake,"

and as usual proved herself a most able agent; for, before the signal was given, the old man felt more than half convinced, that it would be doing his boy a cruel injury were he to be prevented from cultivating the friendship of a family, whose peculiar fondness for writers would make them so dear and precious to him.

Clara heard all this, but said nothing: for how could she? The party had divided itself into two *tête-à-têtes*, leaving her as completely alone as if she had remained in the drawing-room. But she knew it was her father's intention to take the young legatee with them to London, if he could persuade him to go; and, to say the truth, this was quite sufficient to make her exceedingly desirous that he should remain at home. Yet, on the whole, though a woman of fashion, Clara was not a bad daughter, being neither particularly self-willed nor ill-tempered; but, nevertheless, there were some

subjects upon which herself and father held very different opinions, and it must be confessed that whenever this happened, which was not seldom, the young lady was apt to be as immovable as a rock ; though, as all young ladies know, the utmost pertinacity of will cannot always secure a daughter from the necessity of doing many things which she does not like. Neither was Clara fortunate enough to agree much more in opinion with her aunt than with her father ; so that had any of her acquaintance happened thoroughly to know her mind, they might have been led to consider her as a person most decidedly addicted to opposition, and that upon pretty nearly every subject of importance which was discussed in her family. This propensity would doubtless have led to great disunion, and much painful disputing among them, had it not been that with all her faults, both her father and aunt were so devotedly attached to her, as frequently to agree between themselves, that the points upon which they knew her to be most violently prejudiced, should be named before her as little as possible.

This discreet forbearance was certainly the cause of many things going on peaceably, which might otherwise have met with a deal of troublesome opposition from a person of Clara's uncompromising temper: and, together with her natural proneness to affection, which not even this tough temper could overcome, the trio contrived to live together on more friendly terms than might have been expected between persons of character so essentially opposed.

No sooner had the two ladies reached the drawing-room, where Mrs. Longuéville threw herself at full length upon a sofa, than her niece exclaimed,

“How can you find any amusement, aunt, in talking such exceedingly great nonsense to that poor old man?”

“My dear, Clara! you grow more exquisitely polite every day. How can I thank you enough for this charming compliment?”

“I ask for no thanks, dear aunt, nor have you any right to be angry; because I so well remember hearing you very eloquently saying exactly the reverse of all I have heard you utter

to-day. Do you remember the last time Mr. Dalrymple dined with us before we left town? Do you remember the manner in which you received his offered introduction of Mr. Holmes?’

“Nonsense, Clara! considering that you are really a very clever girl, it is astonishing how often you talk of things that you know nothing about. For pity’s sake, let me have no more of good farmer Chesterfield. I am sick of him ‘Bid me discourse’ of any thing that either London or Paris can offer of legitimate interest for a woman of fashion, I shall be willing to oblige you; but no more of farmer Chesterfield if you love me.”

“And yet, my dear aunt, all you have been doing and saying for the last hour, is precisely calculated to bring the Chesterfield race upon you to perpetuity. Know you not, that papa has conceived the project of taking the young man to London with him?”

“Well, my dear, and very good-natured of him, too. What *can* you find to say against such an action as that?”

“I shall find very little to say against it,” said Clara, colouring. “But considering the annoyance you have just expressed from the necessity of conversing with the father, I should have imagined that you might have felt some distaste at the idea of being domesticated with the son.”

“Not the least to the purpose my dear, which I grieve to say is not unfrequently the case with your observations. But come, Clara, I will be sincere with you, and confess that I think I comprehend what you would be at. You are thinking of Dalrymple, my poor love ; and you fear lest he should be displeased at seeing so very well-looking a youth as this rustic permitted to run tame in Bruton-street.

“But here you are wrong, too, my poor Clara ! For if you are pertinaciously determined not to marry without being what you call mutually attached, and if the only man you have a fancy for evidently does not care a farthing for you—though beyond all contradiction you have been for the last two years the handsomest unmarried

woman in London—the way to rouse him from his indifference, is not to humour all his fancies as you do, but to pique him by a good strong fit of jealousy. I have no doubt you are right in supposing that he would think such a hanger-on as your father proposes to make of this unfledged young poet, a prodigious impropriety; and for that very reason you ought to patronise the scheme above all things.”

Whether it was Miss Meddows’s habitual propensity to differ from her aunt, or any other cause, which made these words obnoxious to her, it is difficult to say; but certain it is that they were so; for not only did she colour and turn her lofty head away with marked displeasure, but her nether lip trembled, and her dark eyes, though no tears escaped from them, shone like diamonds sprinkled with dew. After the pause of a moment, however, she replied with gentleness, yet with some touch of her usual firmness too,

“You will oblige me, aunt Longuéville, by never again mentioning Mr. Dalrymple as being

more or other to me than an old acquaintance and my father's ward. He neither is, nor ever can be, any thing more."

"Very well, my dear; and now we will have some coffee."

The trio they had left in the dining-room soon joined them; and no one who knew Sir George could doubt for a moment, that whatever his object had been in inviting his rustic neighbours, it had answered, for he entered laughing, and with every appearance of the most perfect good humour.

"You are no whist-player, I suppose, Chesterfield," said he, rather amused, as it should seem, by his own suggestion; for his eyes expressed the sort of covert merriment which is so often seen to be enjoyed by those who love to quiz quietly and without committing themselves by saying a word about it.

"No, sir; at least, not in such a presence," was old Chesterfield's grave reply.

"Then I think, Clara, you must give us a song—something English, of course, you know.

You mean, Chesterfield, to give us the pleasure of your company to tea?"

As this was said in a voice that expressed a doubt, to say the least of it, the observant old man replied,

"No, Sir George; many thanks: but the sooner we get home with our news the better. So, when I have indulged with another cup of this fine coffee, we will wish you good night."

"Aye, aye, I understand. Your good wife will like to set about her preparations without loss of time: and egad, Charles, we have not given her too much, have we? Give her my best respects, and tell her that all she leaves undone for want of longer notice, we will take care to supply in London." Then drawing the old man aside, the kind and thoughtful baronet said to him in a whisper, "Of course, you will take up this legacy, my good friend, without loss of time. I hope the good lad will be careful, and contrive to live upon the interest till he can increase his means by the help of his pen. Unluckily, government interest is dreadfully low just now; but till he

comes of age, poor fellow, he can do no better, I am afraid—unless, indeed, his guardians—By the bye, Chesterfield, I think you told me you were his only guardian?”

“Yes, Sir George, I am his only guardian.”

“So much the better, my good friend, so much the better. It may spare you a monstrous deal of trouble. However, for the present, you can do nothing, I suppose, but put it into our detestable three-and-a-half per cent stocks. Depend upon it, I shall immediately make it my business to see if he cannot at once dispose of some of his compositions to advantage; and meantime, Chesterfield, you must not send him up quite penniless, poor fellow! It is impossible to do without a few shillings and sixpences in London.”

“I suppose so, Sir George,” replied the tranquil-spirited farmer, smiling complacently. “But you know, sir, it will be easy enough to have our Charles back again, if he finds out that his money goes faster than is convenient. As long as the old roof stands, there is no fear of his wanting board and lodging, and when that’s

come by easy, there can be no great danger of serious trouble. Besides, Sir George, you will find no great deal to do for keeping him steady. There never was a lad had less fancy for spending than Charles, except indeed for buying books—but at any rate he'll have enough for that now."

"Oh, yes! we will hope so. And you will take care, will you, that he is garnished with a trifle for starting? Of course, you will get the principal immediately, and I'll engage for it that my friend Charles will not bring you to a very severe account next Christmas, if you do dip into it for what will be necessary to fit him out just at first."

"No fear of that, Sir George, between my boy and me. It is lucky enough that he has had that new suit of broad-cloth just brought home, which is as good as Gloucester can furnish; and that's the staple commodity, as we say, of a man's wardrobe at all times. And as to all other things, his mother is sure to let him have enough."

An amiable smile, full of mockery, again

adorned the handsome mouth of Sir George, as he listened; but he only said, as he gave his estimable neighbour a farewell shake of the hand, "Every thing will be quite as it should be, I have no manner of doubt, and whatever is absolutely necessary to supply the inevitable difference between London and the country, so sensible a man as yourself will not refuse to supply."

The whispering conversation was then broken up; the young man rose from the chair he had silently occupied while it lasted; Mrs. Longuéville bowed a farewell, which would have been perfect in its smiling kindness, had she not yawned in the midst of it; Miss Meddows uttered a simple, and, as it seemed to Charles, a very proud "good night:" and Sir George, once more frankly extending his ready hands to both his guests at once, "good by"-ed them off; and then, almost before the door was fully closed after them, rang the bell, that a card-table might be set for his sister and himself to play *écarté*.

Neither the father nor son greatly enjoyed

their homeward walk together. The old man's heart was full; and as he thought how doubtful it was whether he should ever take another walk with him by the pale pure light of the moon, feeling as certain as he then did that the heart and conscience of his darling boy was as free from sin as he believed them now, he dared not speak lest his voice should betray that he was weeping. And Charles, though assuredly no such doubts and fears interfered to destroy the charm of that sweet tranquil hour, was, nevertheless, incapable of enjoying it, because his conscience reproached him for feeling that had he been alone he should have enjoyed it more.

At length the old man broke the silence which had hitherto been interrupted only by the even sound of their own feet-falls, and the trilling notes of a far-off nightingale, and gently began to perform the often-repeated part of Polonius to his departing son. The young man listened as a young man ought, in perfect silence, and if any of the excellent precepts he then received were doomed to be forgotten, it certainly was

not because the circumstances under which he heard them were such as to render attention difficult.

Capricious April sometimes gives us hours of such gentle temperature, that they beguile us into thinking, not only that spring, but summer itself has come. And so it was on the evening that Charles and his father came sauntering home, between eight and nine o'clock, from their dinner at the Grange.

One of the prettiest features of the venerable mansion of Maplebury was its Gothic porch. Throughout the summer and autumn its atmosphere was redolent of the perfume of successive honeysuckles; the sweet climatis followed, nor breathed its last delicious sigh, till the very sternest frown of winter had banished all such holiday decorations from the earth. And now, unnumbered violets, with here and there a shy white blossom peeping out to meet the glances of the moon, spread themselves, as if conscious of safety, within and without, till the rich air seemed a treasury of their breath. It was here that the father and son found the three females

of the family seated, wrapped in their almost needless shawls, and gossiping in the steady moonlight which fell full upon them, while Christopher and his dog were busy at the sheepfold, where they were lovingly assisting each other in the operation of enclosing some scores of fleecy mothers, with their bleating young ones, for the night.

“So soon returned, father?” exclaimed Susan, who, from her position, was the first to see them as they approached. “I did not think it was possible to dine with such very fine folks, and get away by this time.”

“And if we had been very fine folks ourselves, Susan, it is likely enough you would have been right; but we staid long enough to do the business we went for, and I had no mind to be troublesome,” replied Mr. Chesterfield.

Bessy almost ceased to breathe in her eagerness to hear what she knew must follow, namely, the to go, or not to go, upon which her hope and terror hung; but the old man seemed in no haste to tell his news, for instead of saying what they were all expecting to hear, he made a sign

to Susan and her niece to make room for him between them, Charles having already slid into the corner next his mother.

“What a night to be sure!” said the farmer, turning up his face to the heavens, and taking off his hat as if in reverence of all the glory he saw there.

“A very fine night, Thomas, no doubt of it,” returned his wife, rather ironically; “but it would be a deal more to the purpose if you’d be pleased to tell us all that has happened, and all that is going to happen, about Charles.”

“And that’s true, wife, and no denying it,” said the good man, replacing his hat, and folding his arms as if settling himself for a discourse of some length. “But, to confess the real state of the case, I don’t like my news well enough to be over fond of telling it.”

“Why, to be sure, Sir George did not go off from it after all? Did he, Thomas Chesterfield?”

“No, Dorcas, no. Nothing of that kind is to be laid to his charge; on the contrary, he seemed more eager than ever, I thought, to do all he promised, and more too. But spite of

all that, Dorcas, my heart is heavy when I think of our dear boy's leaving us."

"Nonsense! nonsense! Thomas; we must not be faint-hearted at the very moment when we have got the best reason in the world to fall down upon our knees and sing 'Oh be joyful!' Is it all settled, husband? That's the point."

"Yes, my dear, it is all settled, and Charles is to be up at the Grange by nine o'clock on Monday morning, that he may be ready to start with them."

"Thank God! that's all right; and now my heart's at ease, I shall be able to set about getting the dear fellow ready," was Mrs. Chesterfield's reply to this decisive bit of information. She spoke this in a voice so loudly gay, that a soft, sad sigh, breathed from the opposite side of the porch, was heard by no one. But the minute afterwards Bessy rose abruptly from her seat, and darted out alone into the broad moonlight. Charles saw her go—he saw, too, that she hung her head, and moved with a rapid and unsteady step, that was neither quite running nor quite walking, into the deep shade of the

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*"Dear, dear Charles is going, then! I cannot stay
and hear them talk about it!"*

orchard upon which a little wicket opened on the right-hand side of the fore-court. He saw it, and he knew why she went as well as if he had been walking by her side, and heard her say,

“Dear, dear Charles is going then! I cannot stay and hear them talk about it.”

For a moment he felt as if he would have given his right hand to have gone after her, to have taken her in his arms, and to have looked at her sweet eyes in the moonshine, as he swore to her by its soft, still-returning light, that his absence, like its own, should only be for a season, and that he too would return again to shine with a gentle radiance upon the path that thenceforward they should pursue together! The youth smiled as the *conchetto* suggested itself, and he thought he could put it prettily enough into rhyme. And then he thought that the image, though really fanciful, was very far from just, for that, if it were the will of Heaven he should shine at all, it would be by no borrowed light. And then away galloped *la folle de logis*, as our neighbours cleverly call each man's par-

ticular whim (a much more significant phrase, by the bye, than our vague term imagination), away galloped *la folle de logis*, and presently bore him high and dry beyond the reach of all common-place, ordinary human feeling, into the empyrean realms of everlasting fame. Then, very naturally, he lost sight of Bessy, who was sitting the while on a low seat of turf, which he had raised for himself and for her, some three years before, with innumerable clusters of apple-blossoms over her head, and a hearty shower of tears falling into her bosom.

But he was more quickly called back to the companionship of the little party in the porch, distant as was the point to which his *escapade* had borne him, than she; for whereas within five minutes after Bessy ran away, Charles found himself *tête-à-tête* with his mother in his bedroom, body and soul engaged in folding, and packing, and pressing, and all the other very earthly occupations required by the preparations for a journey; she was still sitting quietly alone in the moonlight, building castles in the air for her dear Charles, and drying her tears as she

remembered how very selfish it was to feel sorry because he was going where he wished to go. How it came to pass that he *could* wish it, was a great mystery to her; and her wisdom could suggest no better reason for it than that it was because he was a man.

“Yes! that must be it,” she murmured, fixing her eyes upon the bright distant stars. “I do believe that men love difficulties, and dangers, and wandering. If there was but a ladder to those beautiful stars I do believe that Charles would like to climb it! And it would be very mean and selfish in me to wish to stop him. I don’t wish it—I won’t wish it. All I *do* wish is, that he should be good and happy!”

And having enjoyed this sort of monologue for nearly an hour, she made her way round the house, and through the kitchen, into her own room, where her aunt soon after entered to give her the accustomed maternal kiss, and wish her good night. Whether Mrs. Christopher had at this time any hope or any fear that some feeling more tender than even sisterly affection was warming itself into life within the heart of little

Bessy, may be doubted. But if any such idea had suggested itself to her, it was more than had happened to the innocent girl herself, who, while looking forward to the hours of solitude she might be able to steal for thinking of Charles, as the only great enjoyment she anticipated till his return, had no more suspicion that she was IN LOVE than she had five years before, when at the age of eleven she had received from him a little writing-desk, as a reward for having profited so rapidly by his writing-lessons. She had loved him dearly then, and she loved him dearly now.

The Sunday passed in its usual sober and orderly manner, an hour being spared by the kind-hearted Mr. Westbrook from the duties of the day for the purpose of giving some very excellent parting advice to his much-loved pupil. All the counsels that tender affection could suggest to ensure his happiness were also uttered to his somewhat unapt ears at home, till at length the moment arrived at which he was to set off in the venerable one-horse chaise that was to convey his luggage to the Grange.

Even to Charles it was not a moment of unmixed pleasure. He felt that he was leaving hearts which loved him dearly ; and when, profiting by the privileged moment, he took Bessy in his arms, and pressed his lips upon her brow, he certainly did feel a pang that while it lasted made him a little doubt the perfection of the happiness he was about to enjoy. "Pretty, gentle creature !" he murmured inwardly, "shall I ever find another that I could love so well ?"

"Charles ! Charles ! for goodness sake don't stand there in that way ! You will keep them all waiting, you will indeed," cried his mother, very earnestly. "There ! your father is got into the chaise, and every earthly thing is as ready as we can make it. Come, dear ! Come !"

Charles prepared to obey, and having once more said farewell to all the rest, turned, ere he sprung into the chaise, to give one parting glance to Bessy ; but she was no longer in sight.

Though the carriage-road was nearly three times as long as the footpath, farmer Chester-

field got over the ground in excellent time. The baronet's carriage was in the very act of driving round to the door, and every thing obliging and proper was said on all sides. The old man then wrung his boy's hand, and with a swelling heart drove home again; while the youth, exhilarated by the busy note of preparation which on all sides sounded in his ears, soon forgot every thing but that there was *“un voyage à faire, et LONDRES au bout.”*

In a few minutes he was seated aloft in the front dickey, beside the butler. Had he been placed on a golden throne, beside a king, his heart could hardly have bounded more triumphantly. “All right,” resounded from behind, the postilions cracked their whips, and Charles Chesterfield felt in every nerve that he was galloping post-haste towards London.

CHAPTER V.

A London Interpretation of a Country Invitation—Sir George gives a slight Sketch of himself to his *Protégé*—Charles Chesterfield makes a new Acquaintance, and finds himself in the way to make others—His great delight thereat.

SIR GEORGE MEDDOWS's house in Bruton-street was not a very large one ; and unless Charles Chesterfield could have been accommodated in the stable, where out of four stalls one was vacant, it would have been quite impossible to assign him any sleeping accommodation on the premises. This fact had doubtless escaped the recollection of Sir George when he invited the young man as a domestic guest ; but it must

have occurred to him *en route*, as almost the first words he addressed to him, after they were seated at their late dinner, were—drawing out his watch as he spoke,

“Egad, Charles, we must send and see about a lodging for you. It is getting confoundedly late.”

It might be that Charles was a little surprised at this ; but he uttered nothing in reply beyond a meek “Thank you, sir ;” and, before the cloth was withdrawn, had very satisfactorily reasoned himself into the conviction that his good father had mistaken the terms of the invitation, and that he himself, misled by his erroneous repetition of it, had stupidly enough misconceived the phrase by which his kind and hospitable patron had signified his condescending wish of seeing him constantly at his table. As soon, therefore, as the weary Mrs. Longuéville and the sombre-looking Clara had quitted the table, Charles very judiciously renewed the subject by saying,

“Will you have the kindness, Sir George, to let one of your servants go with me to look for

a lodging ! I am afraid I should feel rather at a loss if I undertook the business by myself."

By no means displeased by this address, which seemed to promise that he should have less trouble with the young rustic, whom for sundry clever reasons he had taken possession of, than he expected, Sir George replied with very cordial good-humour,

" Quite right, my good fellow ! William shall go with you as soon as you have had another glass of wine. I mean to be very strict with you about wine, Charles—I am on honour with your excellent father about keeping you steady in all ways. And, to tell you the truth, it is just as well for many reasons, that you should be cautious about drinking ; for such wines as I give are enormously expensive, and, rich as I am, Charles, I keep all my expenses in the most perfect order ; for without this, the revenue of an emperor would not enable me to indulge myself by doing a generous thing whenever my heart prompted me to it. You don't know me yet, Chesterfield ; but when you do, you will find that my character

is perhaps more remarkable for a nicely-regulated balance between generosity and economy, than for any other trait whatever."

"I can conceive nothing more noble than a mind so constituted!" replied Charles with enthusiasm. "These two qualities, if well counterpoised, most surely produce a character and conduct as near perfection as it is possible for a human being to approach!"

This was uttered with a sort of eloquent boldness which the young man was almost himself surprised at, till he recollected that upon a mind like his, strong feelings of all kinds will ever act like inspiration; and when he cast down his eyes as he ceased, it was with the flashing consciousness that he had spoken like a poet. Perhaps Sir George also thought he spoke like a poet; but at any rate the manner pleased him, for he replied,

"You judge me, Charles, as I deserve; and I will own to you, that I love you the better for it. Never restrain your feelings, my dear fellow, when you speak of me. My purpose is to treat you with the affection of a father; and

if I find an answering warmth of affection on your part, the union between us will be a happy one for both parties."

Young Chesterfield fervently pressed his hands upon his heart, and exclaimed,

"For me—for me, Sir George, its happiness must indeed be greater than any gratitude can repay!"

"Say no more, Charles! I understand you perfectly, and know exactly all you feel! And now, my dear boy, be off. I spoke a word to William before dinner—I never forget those I love, Charles. And when he has introduced you to the house I mentioned, it may be as well, I think, that you should offer to pay a month's rent for the rooms before hand. Those sort of people always like it best. I have told William that you will want a couple of rooms, for, in point of fact, Charles, it would be utterly impossible for you to do any thing in the way of composition, unless you had a quiet little snugery of your own. You will always find me as thoughtful about your comforts as about your interests. By the way, my dear

fellow, how much money did your good old father send you off with?"

"He gave me ten pounds, Sir George," replied young Chesterfield, not without some little feeling of filial pride, while stating the liberality of his parent. But Sir George whistled a sort of quizzing whistle, which, though not fully understood by his companion, raised doubts in his mind as to whether he had been right in his own estimate of the donation.

"Your good father does not quite understand what it is to start for a London race, Charles," said the baronet. "However, we must manage it somehow or other. If the old gentleman objects to letting you have a little of your own money to make a start with, I must look about, and see if I can't find means for you to borrow a hundred or two, at a tolerably christian-like interest. There, I have nothing further to say to you just at present, so now you may go, and you will come back to tea, you know. Yet, stay an instant, Charles—it is better that I should change your ten-pound-

note for you than the people at the lodgings. That sort of gentry are always so puzzle-headed, that ten to one they will make some blunder. Is it Bank of England, Charles?"

"Yes, Sir George;" and the young man placed the note before his thoughtful friend.

"Quite right! Now then—one, two," and nine fair sovereigns were spread upon the table. "I must give you the rest in silver, Charles, for I have no more gold in my purse;" and thereupon the baronet counted out twelve splendid shillings and a sixpence. "'Faith, you have got my last penny now," he said, laughing gaily; "so for just seven and sixpence you must trust me."

Charles declared himself greatly obliged by this thoughtful kindness, and then set off with the footman for South Molton-street, where a small back-parlour, and the attic which crowned it at the distance of three stories, were speedily secured for him at a pound a-week. The bargain being made, and William having carefully stipulated for boot-cleaning and clothes-brushing, Chesterfield drew forth his purse, and, in

conformity to his patron's advice, laid four of his sovereigns upon the table.

"For a month, sir?" said the woman.

"Yes, ma'am, for a month."

"For a month, *certain*," interposed William. "But if you make the young gentleman comfortable, it is likely he may bide lots of time longer than that."

This important transaction being finished, Charles and his obliging attendant set off again to Bruton-street.

"I hope you will be pleased to remember me, sir, for the good turn I have done you," said the footman.

"I shall, indeed, William," replied Chesterfield, with great simplicity. For a minute or two the man kept up at about half a step behind him, expecting the result of this promise; but as nothing followed it, he touched the young gentleman's elbow rather familiarly, and said, laughingly,

"Come, come, Mr. Chesterfield, you must not come over me that way neither. Master has been giving you a lesson, sir, haven't he?"

But that isn't fair in a gentleman like you, just come fresh into a fine fortune, as they say—that's different, you know, sir, from what it is with us ; so I hope you'll be pleased not to put me off with promises."

"Indeed I don't mean to put you off, William ; but what is it you expect of me ?"

"Why, you can't think half-a-crown too much, sir, especially if I'm to call a cab to take you and your boxes at night."

Charles gave the demanded halfcrown, and the footman not only touched his hat, but dropped into the rear, proving thereby that he was an honest man, ready and willing to return payment for value received.

"Ah ! Chesterfield ! just five minutes too late for coffee, my fine fellow !" said Sir George Meddows, in his most frank and friendly manner, as his *protégé* entered the drawing-room. "But I take it that you are not so much used to it as to miss it greatly—and Clara will give you some tea by and by."

Miss Meddows had sat silent and sad-looking during dinner, which, when remarked upon by

her father, was accounted for by her saying that the journey had fatigued her; she now, however, exerted herself sufficiently to ring the bell; and having done so, walked immediately to the other end of the room, so that when a servant entered she was so near the door, as to give him an order unheard by the rest of the party, and then passed by him and left the room.

Ere she returned to it, a cup of coffee had been brought to Charles, who took it in the belief that he owed it to the attention of the servant.

"I shall go to the club presently, but it is rather early yet," said Sir George to his sister; "Do you feel up to a little *écarté*, Amelia?"

"I am fit for nothing else," replied the lady. "But you will win all my shillings, Sir George; for I am too tired to know what I am about."

The card table was set, and the unwearied pair renewed their nocturnal occupation with as much relish as if they had not done the same thing many thousand times before. Charles meanwhile placed himself in a deep arm-chair near the fire, and would certainly have been

asleep in a minute or two, had not his patron aroused him by saying,

“You will always find books, Charles, whenever you happen to spend your evenings here, by just looking about a little in the back drawing-room.”

Whether bookishly disposed at that moment or not, the young man rose, as in duty bound, to look about a little; but there were no lights in the back drawing-room, and therefore, in order to do as he was bid, Charles took one from a table near him.

“Pray take care of the carpet, Mr. Chesterfield!” said Mrs. Longuéville, rather fretfully. “Perhaps you do not burn wax constantly at Maplebury, and you have no idea how infinitely more destructive it is than—than any thing else. It is very odd, George,” continued she, laughing languidly; “but it is a positive fact that I *cannot* pronounce that word!”

“Game!” exclaimed Sir George, as he turned the king in dealing. “What word, Amelia? What are you talking about?”

“Upon my honour, I believe I have lost the

game by my care of your carpets!" she replied. "But I know that such a lad as that," she added, lowering her voice, "never does carry a wax-candle without letting it overflow as he walks along."

"Very likely, sister," replied the baronet, in the same subdued voice, "and lecture him about it as much as you like, only do it so as not to affront him, remember. I am quite determined to set him going as an author—there is nothing like it nowadays, positively nothing, when a man has a powerful friend or two to puff him; and observe, Amelia, I promise myself considerable pleasure and amusement from pushing him forward, and making him a little acquainted with the world. This, of course, will cost him a few of the hundreds he has become possessed of so strangely; but I know he cannot spend them better—it is the only way, eventually, to make his fortune. Of course, you understand this sort of thing, Amelia, as well as I do; and if you find it necessary to keep him in order, let it be done civilly and coaxingly. You understand me?"

“A few hundreds?” repeated Mrs. Longueville, interrogatively; and then added, “I am sure, dear George, I shall always feel a pleasure in being kind to any *protégé* of yours.”

By this time Chesterfield had completed his looking about, and having found, amidst a prodigious collection of annuals, a volume of Spencer, he ventured to select it, even though it had “*Clara Meddows*” inscribed in fair characters on the title-page. But hardly had he settled himself in his luxurious seat, and indulged for a moment the consciousness of being very comfortable, when the drawing-room door was thrown open, and the name of Mr. Dalrymple announced.

Not having yet made that acquaintance with the world which was to cost him the few hundreds Sir George talked about, it appeared to him quite impossible to pursue his occupation in the presence of this stranger, and having accordingly laid his book aside, he had recourse to the only amusement left him, namely, examining the person, and observing the manners of this new specimen of the fashion-

able world; for that he was of the class so denominated, Charles, notwithstanding all his rustic ignorance, felt instantly convinced.

But as Mr. Dalrymple is destined to be of some importance in the narrative before us, the reader shall be put a little more *au fait* of his peculiarities and position than Charles, with all his acuteness, was capable of becoming at that time.

Arthur Dalrymple was a young man not quite twenty-six years of age, but with a character much more formed than is usually found so early in life. Accident had contributed to this as well as nature; for he had been early placed in circumstances that enforced the necessity both of thought and action. Though born heir to a large fortune, and coming to the possession of it at an early age, he had passed some years of his life under great embarrassment, or, more properly speaking, under the necessity of witnessing the overwhelming embarrassments of his father. It has often been said, that a warning is better than an example; and in no instance could this appear to be more

decidedly the truth than in the case of young Dalrymple. Both his father and grandfather had passed their lives in as great and reckless extravagance as a property, entailed with peculiar strictness, would permit; and during the last three years of his father's life, the young man had been a sharer in many very painful scenes. Placed at Eton and at Oxford by his grandfather (who survived his father by a few months), his scholastic education had been particularly well attended to, though his holidays the while were spent sometimes with his grandfather in London, and sometimes with his father at Brussels, in a manner very little calculated to make him consider learning as the one thing needful to man, whatever it might be to a boy. But, luckily for him, his holidays were not happy holidays; and all things that surrounded him during these intervals, were wonderfully soon valued at their worth. His mother had been too long dead for him to remember her. His grandfather was that most detestable of all human varieties, an aged man, addicted wholly and solely to worldly pleasure;

and his father, the contemptible victim of the most unprincipled self-gratification, was banished from his country because his allowance of twelve hundred a-year did not enable him to live in it. Having been indulged in every conceivable whim till twenty-one, he was from that time to the hour of his death continually engaged in acrimonious, and generally vain struggles with his father for the means of indulging the vices which he had almost systematically been taught. He had married early a pretty English girl whom he met at Florence, and who brought him a few thousands, which, in consequence of the old gentleman's consenting to a life-settlement on the estate, had been placed without restraint in the hands of her husband, and she had the great good fortune not to survive their expenditure. The little Arthur, the only fruit of this union, had been educated, as before mentioned, at the expense of his grandfather, who agreed to undertake it, on condition that the system pursued should be dictated by himself. To this the gay young father made not the slightest objection; and

the old man, having convinced himself by experience that it did not always answer to bring up a child exactly in the way he should go, determined that the young heir should have the education of an ordinary English gentleman, as he was pleased to express it, and trust to his own good taste, aristocratic descent, and ample fortune, for the making a man of fashion of him afterwards.

The result of this was not exactly what the old gentleman either wished or expected. His grandson indeed became a scholar ; and it could hardly be denied that, in all points of comparison with *ordinary* English gentlemen, he was rather above than below the average standard. But in almost all the requisites of a *man of fashion*, in the sense given to the phrase by his two immediate progenitors, he was remarkably deficient. His father had been used to boast that he had carefully abstained from contracting a second marriage, from consideration for the interest and the feelings of his son ; but this devotion to him never appeared to be very highly appreciated by the young Arthur, who

in truth, would greatly have preferred finding a well-conducted English mother-in-law presiding over the paternal household, to the highly-roused Walloon lady, who condescended to officiate with brevet rank as mistress of the house. The boy had formed intimacies with one or two lads at Eton, which had ripened into friendship at college ; and having in the thoroughly English homes of these boys learned the genuine national manners of his countrywomen, most bitter to his feelings was the contrast presented by the females he encountered at his home. His father had some musical taste, and affected more ; the woman he had selected for his companion shared this taste with him, and her friends and acquaintance were all of the same warbling clique, most of them having second-rate professional engagements at the opera. Had this set been encountered any where but at his home, his only natural home, Arthur would have passed out from among them with distaste, but they would have produced no lasting effect of any kind upon his mind. As it was, the gay, thoughtless season of youth became to him

a period of melancholy musing. His heart was not indeed withered, but it was unnaturally compressed, if the phrase may be allowed ; for though none of its sensibillites were extinguished, there was little outward sign left that they still existed. In addition to this deep cause of sorrow he had to endure, from the time he quitted college to that of his father's death, the wretched spectacle of an expenditure eternally exceeding the means that were to supply it ; and all the miserable tricks by which a household, constituted like that of his father, contrives to ensure the luxuries of the table and the toilet, in despite of failing credit and exhausted means.

At length this most unhappy portion of his existence was brought to a close. His father died at the age of forty-five, and the young man was summoned to the London house of his grandfather. But there no peace awaited him. Bills from every imaginable species of tradesmen, from the wealthiest wine-merchant to the poorest little vender of potatoes, followed him by dozens, and obliged him from a sense of

honour to persecute the old man with petitions for pecuniary aid, though the doing so brought a feeling of degradation with it, which no motive less powerful could have enabled him to endure. But he believed it to be his duty to see these people paid; and by dint of perseverance, most harassing to the old man, and productive to himself of feelings little short of torture, he achieved it.

During the few months which elapsed before the old gentleman followed his son to the grave, he made an entirely new will, in the preamble to which he stated, that, as his grandson and only heir had never, since taking up his final residence beneath his roof, permitted a single day to pass without persecuting him for money, he had come to the resolution of placing all his personalities in trust, till the improvident young man should have attained the age and the wisdom of twenty-six years. The law, declaring him to be a major at twenty-one, would at his death invest him with a life interest in all his estates; but the personalities, which were large, consisting of a magnificent service of plate,

many paintings of first-rate excellence, his house in Portman-square, with all its splendid furniture, and moreover whatever money he might leave at his banker's, over and above the expenses of his own funeral, and the discharge of his own debts, he left to his dear friend, Sir George Meddows, in trust for his grandson, Arthur Dalrymple, to be paid over, and delivered into his hands as soon as he should have attained his twenty-sixth birthday, and not before.

This somewhat absurd restriction was productive of neither inconvenience nor mortification of any kind to Arthur Dalrymple. He felt not the slightest inclination to inhabit his fine house ; neither did he wish to dismantle it ; so that the sort of ostentatious care which his guardian (as Sir George liked to call himself) bestowed upon keeping it scrupulously and accurately in order, was precisely what he most desired respecting this portion of his large property.

The old man, in fact, left no debts, having for the last three years of his life taken a fancy

rather to save than to spend his money ; and as he chanced to die precisely one fortnight after receiving his rents, the sum left at his banker's was considerable. Of this Mr. Dalrymple requested a few hundreds, either as an allowance a loan, a request which was immediately complied with, the form of a loan being preferred by Sir George, inasmuch as the whimsical will of his old friend vested in him no power of making an allowance.

No transaction could pass off in a more easy, pleasant, and friendly way, and the acquaintance of long standing which existed between the parties was naturally increased into intimacy by it.

Dalrymple was now within three months of his second majority. A considerable portion of the two last years he had passed at his place in Herefordshire, and during six weeks of grouse-shooting, he had made his home in a very remote old place in Scotland, which, though a proud domain, from the length of time it had been in the family, had rarely of late years boasted the presence of any master but the

bailiff. When in London, Mr. Dalrymple inhabited chambers in the Albany, and it would perhaps have been difficult to find any other man in Europe, possessed of seven thousand a year, and without a particle of parsimony in his disposition, who lived in a manner so perfectly simple and unostentatious.

Had Mr. Dalrymple been asked by Edward Groves, an old schoolfellow, and his only very intimate friend, why he so frequently spent a part of his evening in Sir George Meddows's drawing-room, he would probably have replied, that it was because he was his guardian. Had he (which he never did) asked himself, it is extremely probable that the question would, from the difficulty of finding a satisfactory answer to it, have been sufficient to cure him of the habit altogether. No such questionings, however, had taken place, and accordingly he entered, as usual, a little before the tea made its appearance, and inquired in a friendly manner for the health of the family after their short absence.

Not even the very critical moment of a deal, when each party counted four, could suffice to

restrain the ever new delight which Sir George Meddows invariably manifested at the sight of his ward.

“Arthur!” he exclaimed, quite sentimentally, “you knew we were thinking of you, wishing for you! Yes, we are all well, my dear fellow, and the country is vastly blossoming and beautiful—but neither apple-trees nor cowslips can make up for what one loses by leaving town, as long as it contains the friends we love the best. Amelia, you owe me five shillings—let us give up this game—we are neck-and-neck, you know; or leave the cards, if you will, just as they are — Clara will be here to make tea for us presently, and then we may finish the game. My dear Dalrymple!” added the amiable baronet, rising, “you must let me introduce to you a young *protégé* of mine, for whom I am greatly interested. He is the son of one of my tenants,” he continued, correcting himself, as he caught the eye of Charles. “Mr. Chesterfield, the father of this young man, farms his own land, and is a near, and excellent neighbour of mine. My friend Charles, here, is a

vowed servant to the nine immortal ladies, whose society, I am sorry to say, I have too often quitted for that of the four aces. But you, Arthur, have no such sins on your conscience, and I hope, therefore, that you will extend a friendly hand to this young poet."

Mr. Dalrymple did extend a hand, and greeted the blushing youth with a good-humoured smile.

"Have you ever published yet, Mr. Chesterfield?" said he.

"That's the very point, Arthur, on which I want to consult you," said Sir George, without waiting for the young man's reply. "I know you are acquainted with whole legions of blue people, male and female, and I shall consider it as a great personal kindness if you will get my young friend set going amongst them."

"I rather fear, Sir George, that you over-rate my influence, but I should have great pleasure in being useful to any young man so circumstanced. Have you written much, Mr. Chesterfield?"

"Immensely!" again answered Sir George

for him ; while Charles, colouring to the eyes both with eagerness and shyness, inspired a greater feeling of interest, perhaps, under this enforced silence, than he could have done by words, had he been permitted to utter them.

“The poor fellow is in danger of being stifled by this affectionate patronage,” thought Dalrymple ; “it will be true charity to withdraw him a little from such excess of zeal—Miss Meddows may be able to tell me better what he is.”

The young lady entered at the same moment ; and had not Charles been too much agitated, and too much occupied by the consciousness of having just heard himself proclaimed a poet, he might have found subject for consolation under the coldness of Miss Meddows towards himself, by observing that she was colder still to the elegant and dignified-looking Mr. Dalrymple. But he had no leisure for such observations ; he was tingling in every vein beneath this dawning of celebrity, and running over in his memory all his favourite compositions, preparatory to the selection he would now be so

soon called upon to make for the inspection of Mr. Dalrymple, and his literary friends.

Clara, meanwhile, with the deliberate and stately step of one who sees not any object which might justify an acceleration of movement, approached the fireplace, round which her father, Mr. Dalrymple, and Charles were standing. The newly-arrived guest stepped forward for the distance of about a yard to meet her, when they shook hands, but with no great manifestation of pleasure on either side; and then Clara, declining the chair offered her near the fire, by observing that it was not cold, retreated to the side of her aunt, who after having assured Mr. Dalrymple, in an accent of graceful fervour, that she was enchanted to see him, had begun playing patience, from a sort of affectionate feeling towards the cards, which led her to think that they had been set aside rather rudely, and to wish that they should not be altogether forgotten and neglected.

“It is time for tea, is it not?” said Clara, addressing her father; “I expected to find the

tea-urn waiting for me, or I should not have left my letter unfinished."

Mr. Dalrymple heard this, and felt as he had often done before, that it was extremely lucky Miss Meddows had not inspired him with any feeling more tender than a mere just and reasonable admiration for her beauty; as she obligingly made it so very evident that his presence and his absence were equally indifferent to her.

The tea-equipage arrived, and, as usual, Mr. Dalrymple was not far from Clara's side, while she presided over it; and, as usual, the conversation by degrees became animated. However little love there might be between the gentleman and lady, they certainly both felt that the other conversed agreeably, and it frequently occurred that within five minutes after a very stiff greeting on both sides, they were engaged in earnest and interesting discourse. Sir George, as usual also, fell back upon the card-table, when sipping his tea, and handling the cards, as if by accident, he soon found him-

self once more in the act of dealing, without very well knowing how it came about. It was then that the younger pair held their discussions on painting, music, poetry, and what not. But never on either side had there been the slightest approach to flirtation, which word, however vulgar, unfortunately admits not of a substitute, as none other in the language expresses the same thing. The acute Mrs. Longuéville, indeed, was quite persuaded that neither in France or England had her proud, shy niece liked any one so well as Mr. Dalrymple, and greatly was she provoked that she could perceive nothing on the gentleman's side to justify any hope that this preference was returned. Frequent were the conversations which she held with her brother on the subject, and though he never could be brought to declare that he believed the gentleman to be quite indifferent, he agreed fully in thinking it expedient that matters should be suffered to take their course, without any interference whatever. In his secret soul, indeed, Sir

George was fully determined upon having Mr. Dalrymple for a son-in-law, by hook or by crook, but of this determination he said not a word—no, not even to his sister.

With a goodnature which made an essential part of his character, Dalrymple prepared to relinquish the sort of tea-table *tête-à-tête*, which, despite his indifference, he felt was often far from being disagreeable, and to receive the young stranger into the circle, as if his being there was not the least annoyance in the world. For this purpose, he again led the conversation to Chesterfield's literary pursuits, and asked Miss Meddows if she had yet sat in judgment on any of his productions.

"I have often heard his compositions spoken of with praise, by our good clergyman at Charlton," she replied; "but I have never seen them myself."

"Perhaps, Mr. Chesterfield, you have not yet unpacked your desk? otherwise, I should be tempted to ask for a specimen."

"All that I have are at my lodgings, sir,"

said Charles, his heart swelling with the hope that he might be sent for them.

This indeed did not happen, but Mr. Dalrymple said, "Have you not committed some of your verses to memory? Could you not recite some short thing to us by rote?"

"I will try, sir," replied Charles, rapidly running over in his head a dozen favourites, both long and short, every one of which he had repeated a hundred times to the echoes of his native woods without missing a syllable. At length he decided upon giving a sonnet which he had laboured at, perhaps, more than any other composition.

"Deep, deep, I feel the potent spirit work!"

he began, in a trembling, husky, and almost sepulchral voice. Then suddenly stopping, he raised his eyes to the ceiling, pressed his clasped hands upon his breast, and exclaimed,

"If my life depended upon it, I could not repeat another syllable!"

Charles Chesterfield was very handsome, and of that peculiar style of beauty which fanciful

people call picturesque. Nothing could be more favourable to its display than the attitude into which he had thrown himself; yet his evident agitation, and even suffering, were so perfectly unaffected and genuine, that it was impossible not to feel both interest and admiration. Dalrymple turned his eyes from the young poet to his fair listener to see what effect he seemed to have produced—she appeared neither to see or hear him!

It was probably pity at seeing him thus abominably neglected, which made Mr. Dalrymple at that moment conceive so strong a degree of interest for him, that he at once determined to use all his efforts to bring him forward. Not being himself a constant resident in London, it struck him that the most effectual manner in which he could do this, would be to present him to a certain Mr. Gibson, whose whole life, and those of his wife and daughters also, were passed in cultivating the friendship of people of talent, in devoting themselves to their service, and in being the means

of bringing into the light of day the flowers which, from untoward accidents of birth, seem born to blush unseen, and, unless assisted by some generous hand, to waste their sweetness altogether upon the desert air.

This Mr. Gibson was a man of easy fortune, and as long as he continued to inhabit the country, might have been termed rich; but his family having for the last four or five years enjoyed what they were wont to call the exquisite luxury of literary life in London, could no longer find contentment in the "merely vegetable existence" to be found out of it.

Happily, with one exception only, the feelings of the whole family were in perfect unison. With *one* exception, they all equally disliked the country, and adored the town; father, mother, and daughters, all with one exception, were ready to make any and every imaginable sacrifice, so that they might but continue to give literary parties, and have innumerable tables covered with albums, all filled with original composi-

tions, of which, for the most part, they were themselves the subject.

The *one* exception to this family harmony was fortunately not a person of sufficient personal importance to produce any very perceptible discord.

Marianne Gibson, the third daughter out of five, was evidently intended as an insignificant person by Nature, being exceedingly small in all her proportions ; totally insensible, as it appeared, to all the glory of renown ; passionately fond of the country ; and hating London, and all that belonged to it, heartily. There was but one way of treating so perverse a spirit—namely, the taking no notice whatever of her before company, and paying as little attention to her in private, as the untoward accident of her having some independent thousands from an uncle would permit. This very rational mode of proceeding was adopted by every member of the family ; and unquestionably a great deal of unprofitable discussion was spared thereby.

Most fortunately for the immediate prosecution of Mr. Dalrymple's friendly plans for Charles Chesterfield, Mr. Gibson was engaged to breakfast with him on the following morning at his chambers. The acquaintance between Mr. Gibson and Mr. Dalrymple was not merely that of London visiting; for the large estate of Mr. Dalrymple was divided from the small estate of Mr. Gibson only by a narrow lane, and though it was only during the last few years that they had become personally acquainted, it not unfrequently happened that county questions equally interesting to both arose, which caused something of more intimate relation between them than would have been likely to take place without. In the Gibson family, Mr. Dalrymple was naturally considered as a very great man, though not so devoted to literature as might have been desirable in a person of his ample fortune; but on the whole he was highly esteemed by them, and he was perhaps aware that no request of his was likely to be neglected.

After again turning his eyes for a moment to

the animated yet embarrassed countenance of the young minstrel, he said,

“Never mind, Mr. Chesterfield! ‘All is not lost that is delayed!’ I shall hope to hear and see your verses too at some future opportunity; meanwhile, I think if you could come and breakfast with me to-morrow morning, I might introduce you to a gentleman who might make both a useful and agreeable acquaintance for you. Will you inquire at the Albany chambers for me to-morrow morning at ten?”

Here were the first-fruits of his journey to London, and that within five hours of his arrival! How should he ever be able to testify one thousandth part of the gratitude he owed to Sir George Meddows for the generous kindness that had brought him there?

The invitation was accepted with such evident delight, that Dalrymple congratulated himself sincerely upon having thought of it. But the heart of Charles was too full to permit of his remaining longer in company; so, whispering a petition into Sir George’s ear for permission to send for a cab, he took his

leave, and was presently landed, with all his packages, at his little lodgings in South Molton-street, a great deal happier than any king on record, and more crammed full of hope than the lowest depths of Pandora's box.

Before he slept, he sat down in his own parlour, and having carefully unpacked his writing-desk, began the first page of his London journal.

Before Mr. Dalrymple left Bruton-street, he asked Sir George Meddows if it were an object with his young friend to turn his poetical talent to immediate profit, and also whether his circumstances were such as to render success really important to him.

Sir George drew his friend aside ere he answered him; and the ladies presumed that in his own diplomatic way he was communicating the history of the unexpected legacy. But they were mistaken. Sir George's reply to Dalrymple's question was this:

"His success, Arthur, is of the most vital importance both to himself and his aged parents. Money—money is the great object; the boy

has decidedly great facility, and this must, if possible, be turned to account."

"I will do all I can to assist him," said the young man; and, making a farewell bow to the ladies, he departed.

CHAPTER VI.

Charles Chesterfield makes rapid strides towards renown —He is introduced to a pre-eminently Literary Coterie, and presented to Mr. Marchmont, one of the Greatest Men of the Age, and Editor of “The Regenerator”— Its effect upon him.

It will not be doubted that Charles arrived punctually at the breakfast-table of Mr. Dalrymple; so punctually, indeed, that it was nearly half an hour before Mr. Gibson arrived. But his host, who perhaps anticipated this ultra-exactness, was ready to receive him, and the half-hour was spent very advantageously for Charles in *tête-à-tête* conversation with a man, equally favoured by nature and fortune, and with a heart

and head less corrupted by the world, and his own prosperous position in it, than it is by any means common to meet with, at the ripe age of twenty-five years and nine months.

With such a one it was impossible that Charles Chesterfield could fail to inspire a friendly degree of interest. The genuine enthusiasm, the youthful freshness of all his feelings, and of all his thoughts,—the glowing yet almost unspeakable gratitude with which Dalrymple's attention inspired him, and the tone of old-fashioned quaintness, if not of originality, which he found in his various compositions and remarks (for Charles had brought a few verses), altogether produced a very strong impression in his favour.

This happy half-hour wore rapidly away, and Mr. Gibson made his appearance. No individual whom his distinguished young neighbour could have invited to breakfast would have appeared to this gentleman unworthy of the most marked politeness and attention; but when Mr. Dalrymple stated Charles Chesterfield to be a young author, whom he expected would speedily become a great favourite with the public, his

advances towards forming an immediate friendship with him were very ardent indeed. Charles at this moment appeared to touch the very goal of all his fondest hopes. He was already spoken of, and spoken to, as an author, a poet, a London author, and a London poet; and had he been offered five hundred pounds in exchange for the honours of that morning he would have rejected them with indignation.

“I trust you are not as yet so buried up and overwhelmed with invitations, my dear sir, as to prevent my introducing you to my family immediately?” said Mr. Gibson.

“I have no acquaintance in London as yet, sir, and shall be most happy to have the honour of waiting upon you,” replied Charles ingenuously.

“Is it possible? I will confess to you, my dear young gentleman, that I hear this with great pleasure, and I feel extremely grateful to my friend, Mr. Dalrymple, for having given me this opportunity of making your acquaintance before the innumerable claims which are sure to beset a man of genius have so entangled you in their

chains, as to render it difficult, not to say impossible, to lay the foundation of that sort of particular intimacy which thoroughly literary people are so desirous of cultivating with the favourite authors of the day. We now start fair, Mr. Chesterfield, nay, I am willing to hope with some little advantage: and I think I may venture to promise you many thoroughly intellectual hours at my house. Mrs. Gibson, though I say it that should not, is certainly rather a remarkable person.—Is she not, Dalrymple? I don't mean at all, however, to speak of her as an authoress—nothing like it. In fact, she has never done any thing herself, beyond the illustrating the great work of the immortal Milton, and there, indeed, she has shown what the tone of her mind really is, without exaggeration: I may avow to you, sir, that it is extraordinary. I have been told by one or two of our leading print-shops, that if she perseveres—and upon my word I think she is capable of any thing on such a subject—if she perseveres, they assure me that the copy may become worth a thousand pounds. It is a singular undertaking, a very

singular undertaking for a lady. But you will judge of this better for yourself, Mr. Chesterfield, when you become an *habitué* in the *boudoir*, as I trust you soon will do, than I can enable you to do by any description."

Notwithstanding the flattering conclusion of this speech, poor Charles at that moment felt a pang most completely new to him. He shuddered, literally shuddered, at his own ignorance! Of the "Paradise Lost" he knew more perhaps than most lads of his age, but as to what could be meant by a lady's illustrating the work, till it became worth a thousand pounds, he knew no more than his mother's cow, Brindle. Mr. Dalrymple saw all this in his heightened colour and troubled aspect. His very eyes seemed to blush as he turned them from the face of Mr. Gibson to his own coffee-cup, and from his coffee-cup again to Mr. Gibson's face. But in this, Arthur saw no very important drawback to the young man's success. "His learning is of another kind," thought he. "He would have better understood a gloss upon Appian, or Opi-
pian, than a fair lady's illustration of any work

under the sun ;” and coming across the stream of Mr. Gibson’s eloquence, by calling his attention to a broiled chicken, he said, “I am quite pleased, Gibson, that I have contrived to get you and Mr. Chesterfield here together, as I feel certain that the acquaintance will be mutually gratifying. You will find in him the sort of talent so well appreciated by yourself, and all your family, and by your means I am in hopes he will soon overcome all the difficulties which of necessity surround a young author, when first entering upon his career. You are well acquainted, I believe, with the editors of several popular periodical works, and it may be desirable, perhaps, that Mr. Chesterfield’s first efforts should appear in one of these. Will you have the kindness to introduce him wherever you think there would be the best chance of his finding encouragement ?”

“Let him come to us to-night,” replied Mr. Gibson eagerly. “Mrs. Gibson will have a small, quite a small committee, this evening, of some of the very cleverest men of the day. Our system is to take no colour, Mr. Dalrymple,

absolutely no colour whatever, and this enables us to seize upon talent wherever we find it, and our little party to-night will be perfectly anti-thistic. This, as I take it, is the real secret of a perfectly well organized literary society. In my own family I encourage the greatest freedom of opinion on all subjects. No two of us, I believe, think exactly the same on any subject of importance; the consequence of which is, that our *salon* is equally agreeable to all parties. I mention this, Mr. Chesterfield, to set you at your ease among us. Let your colour be what it may, you may venture to pronounce yourself."

Poor Charles again felt terribly in the dark; nevertheless he had understood enough to make him superlatively happy. He was invited to make one in a party of London *litterati*, and the wide earth had no pleasure to offer which he would have accepted in exchange for it.

Mr. Dalrymple perceived that he had achieved exactly what he wished as an opening, and trusted to his *protégé's* good gifts for the rest. While Mr. Gibson knew that he was about to

convey to his lady and daughters the most agreeable news he could possibly bring them.

Thus all, equally pleased by the result of the meeting, were equally willing to bring it to a close, and they soon separated, with a most satisfactory increase of contentment on all sides.

It was with great modesty, though with undisguised delight, that Charles announced at the dinner-table the invitation he had received. Sir George expressed himself well pleased. "I knew Dalrymple could be useful," he said. "He could not have done any thing better for you. Every body knows Gibson; and, better still, Gibson knows every body. But, look ye, Charles, if you begin to get invitations in this way, I must positively send my tailor to you. That broad-cloth suit your good father boasted of may be kept as good as new till you get back to Maplebury. I'll send to Willis and order him to dispatch a fellow here to-morrow to take your measure."

Clara Meddows heard all this, and knit her brows. Mrs. Longuéville did not hear it at all,

and as neither of them spoke, and Sir George drew forth two or three letters from his pocket, Charles ventured to make a circular bow and steal away, thinking it might be advantageous to spend a solitary hour or two at his lodgings, preparing himself for any questions which might be asked him, concerning what he had already done, or what it was his intention to do; and also by selecting such of his more important compositions as he should best like to show, in case he should be asked to exhibit a specimen. Slowly and carefully he dressed himself, though more than half ashamed of deeming his external appearance of any consequence on an occasion so purely intellectual; and then, for a long hour of trembling but delicious agitation, he sat before his large country-made desk, surrounded by folio pages, on which were written, in a fair round-hand, odes, sonnets, and songs, while the more massive labour of a recently finished volume of tales, lay neatly packed in quarto sheets beside him. Often did he make a selection for the possible wants of the evening, and as often change it, till at length the dreaded yet

longed for moment arrived, and the girl of the house entered to announce that the cab he had ordered to convey him to Baker-street, was at the door. In all haste he now seized upon the three compositions which little Bessy had praised the most, and, hastily locking up the rest, hurried into his cab and drove off. The drive is rather a long one, but to him it seemed hardly to occupy three minutes, so insufficient did the interval appear for his last meditations as to the manner in which he ought to present himself. Shyness, as naturally the result of the manner in which he had passed his life as was the bloom on his cheek, and the unquenched brightness of his eye, struggled hard within him against his immense disdain of every species of distinction not arising from literary renown.

“If there be any authors there,” thought he, “authors who have already published, and are received into the republic of letters, to these I will bow low, as an eastern slave before the throned master of his existence ; but I will not, for I ought not, to tremble, or suffer my spirit to quail, before any other distinction whatever. It is this which I

must ever keep in mind, it is this which must teach me to raise my eye undaunted, forgetful that my home has been a farmhouse, and my kindred the tillers of the soil."

At this moment the cab drew up suddenly, very suddenly, and Charles was thrown forward with a jerk, which very nearly brought him, nose foremost, on the pavement. Being active and alert, however, he saved himself by seizing upon some portion of the harness, and swung himself safely to the ground. But this *tour de force* was much less difficult than that by which, after paying his cabman with a hand which shook from nervous agitation, and stammering his own name, first to one puzzled servant and then to another, he at last mounted the stairs to make his first appearance in the arena where alone he wished to combat and to conquer. The sound of rushing waters seemed to gurgle in his ears, as the drawing-room door was thrown open. In the midst of this he distinguished the words "Mr. Charles Chesterfield!" and in the next moment he found himself, without knowing very well how he got there, standing precisely in the mid-

dle of the room, one hand in that of the gentleman whom he had met at breakfast in the morning, and the other clasped by a lady, who evidently deemed herself privileged to take it, held it firmly, and long enough to make the following speech before she resigned it:—

“Welcome, Mr. Charles Chesterfield! a thousand times welcome! We literary people have a sort of freemasonry amongst us, which out-values a thousand introductions! I feel at once that you are *of us*! May I not flatter myself that you, too, feel that you have got among kindred souls?”

The features of the tall lady who thus addressed him were large, and strongly marked, and might, perhaps, in early youth, have been accounted handsome by the class of persons who admire a countenance of almost masculine firmness and decision. Whether Mr. Gibson, who was of a slight and rather delicate fabric, might have ventured upon so disproportioned an alliance, if not encouraged and stimulated by the lady's being in possession of ten thousand pounds, may be doubtful; but be this as it may,

the marriage was accomplished, and proved one of singular felicity. Nothing, indeed, could exceed Mr. Gibson's admiration of his lady's intellectual powers, which she confessed herself were something of a masculine order, and which he delighted to proclaim aloud to be "first of the first." Of the five daughters who crowned this happy union no detailed description can be necessary, as any curiosity which the kind reader may feel concerning them, will probably be sufficiently gratified in the course of the following pages.

There are few novices whom Mrs. Gibson could have addressed in the words above quoted who would have listened to them with so satisfactory a degree of self-assured intelligence as himself. Charles Chesterfield understood her perfectly. "Yes ! there is such freemasonry !" was the response instantly and distinctly made by his kindling eye and delightful smile ; and, had he spoken volumes, the lady could not have comprehended better the gratitude and the happiness that were swelling at his heart. She pressed the hand she held with an energy and

freedom which ladies of fifty (if they like it) may bestow unchallenged upon any hand, and nodding her head with very significant approbation, added, "Enough! I know you, Charles Chesterfield, as well as if I had myself assisted in the development of the mind so delightfully legible at this moment in your features!"

"I knew it! I was perfectly sure of it!" exclaimed Mr. Gibson, in the glad voice of one to whom disappointment in the hope just realized would have brought terror, as well as grief. "I was quite sure, my dear, darling love, that with your astonishing and unerring tact, you would immediately appreciate the talent of this young man. I was perfectly sure of it. Upon my honour I was. Dalrymple will be delighted, perfectly delighted, when he hears you have taken him by the hand. You are launched, young gentleman, I can tell you that, and I heartily wish you joy of it. I shall leave you in her hands; altogether and entirely in her hands. She will tell you, better than I can, in whose presence you are, which, if I mistake not, you will count among the things worth knowing."

And Mr. Gibson turned his thumb, which had probably become flexible by the habit of indicating the distinguished persons in his circle, to the uninitiated, over his shoulder, towards a personage who stood leaning against the chimney-piece, silently reconnoitring the company by a pair of glasses which were suspended round his neck, though looking the while as if he scarcely thought it worth his trouble to do so.

Having performed this expressive manœuvre, accompanied by a significant yet mysterious nod, Mr. Gibson walked off, leaving Charles in a state of perfect felicity, all timidity having for the moment completely left him, while his secret but long-cherished belief in his own powers returned upon him, freed from all the paralyzing effects of shyness. It was, in truth, a moment of ecstasy. As Mr. Gibson walked off, he caught the arm of his youngest daughter, who was the one of all his four intellectual children to whom he was the most inclined to venture upon a little display of individual consequence, and said, "Theodosia, my dear, I wish you to be very civil to that young man. I decidedly mean

to patronize him. It is a marked thing, Theodosia, a very marked thing, to be the first to bring a *débutant* into notice. I own I like it."

"Is this the first literary *soirée* at which he ever assisted?" demanded the young lady, passing her fingers through the knot of papa's black stock, in order to improve the set of it; a species of personal attention, indeed, which she often bestowed upon him; for, inheriting in a strong degree his own propensity to patronize, she was wont to exercise it in a very flattering manner upon himself, never failing to set him to rights in all ways when she thought him wrong, which, as it happened frequently, occasioned his receiving a degree of notice from her which made her decidedly his favourite. Not that he in the least degree wondered at or resented the inattention of his other daughters. Mr. Gibson was much too sensible a man not to be aware of the effect of great intellectual powers upon the manners and tempers of young ladies so distinguished by Providence, and he felt too proud of being the husband of Mrs. Gibson, and the father of those four very superior young women,

the Miss Gibsons (not to mention the one called Marianne, who did not indeed count for much), to complain of what he considered as the inevitable consequence of their early and devoted attention to literature. Yet, notwithstanding the philosophical love of mind to which he had thus brought himself, he certainly did like Theodosia's praising and patronizing, and they were considered by every body as being most wonderfully attached to each other, and as offering a perfect pattern of fatherly and daughterly love.

"Is this the first literary *soirée* at which he ever assisted?" said the young lady a second time, giving her papa a little pat upon his cheek as she completed the arrangement of his cravat.

"Certainly the first in London, my dear," replied the stock-still father, "for he arrived only yesterday. Thank you, Dosy, darling, that will do, won't it? There, I can see it in the glass, my love, and you have made it look quite stylish. Go to your mamma now, and I dare say she will present him."

Theodosia took the hint, and repaired to the

side of her mother, but the animated lady was not at that moment at leisure to attend to her. In explanation of her husband's parting words she had said, "Yes, Chesterfield! I will do you this service without delay. - That gentleman with the long hair and uncovered throat, is Marchmont! That I can reckon him as my dearest friend, and most constant guest, is the great glory of my life! When I tell you that there is nothing which the world could offer which I could not sacrifice rather than lose this distinction, you may judge in some degree what he must be. Noble creature! Does he not seem, as he stands there, *lorgnette* in hand, looking out upon the world, does he not look like a being of a superior order reading the very souls of all around him?"

The voice of Mrs. Gibson was rather remarkable for being loud and clear, and as she did not lower it while she uttered these words, it was difficult to believe that Mr. Marchmont did not hear them, but no trace of his doing so was perceptible on his countenance; nay, when she had approached close to him, with her arm

passed through that of Charles, and pronounced aloud, "Marchmont!" within a foot of his ear he still appeared unconscious that she spoke.

"Gracious Heaven! what abstraction!" said Mrs. Gibson, turning to Charles. "Does it not remind you of the stories we have heard of Sir Isaac Newton? Beyond all question his power of withdrawing the soul from outward objects is one of the most precious privileges which nature accords to genius."

Charles looked in her face, not very well comprehending the nature of the privilege of which she spoke, but, fortunately, the look was more that of a person hanging entranced upon every syllable she uttered, than of one merely puzzled, and she therefore almost affectionately pressed his arm, as she replied, "A moment's thought, dear Mr. Chesterfield, will show you what I mean. Look at that striking countenance. Observe its calm—its utter ignorance of all around. Surely that power of withdrawing, as it were, the heavenward spirit from all that besets it here, and permitting it to soar on the wings of thought far above us all, has some-

thing godlike in it ! But I must not leave him thus. My voice must penetrate e'en to the depth of his shrine—for do I not bring him a new worshipper ? Marchmont ! dear Marchmont !” she continued, speaking ever clear and loud, so that all present might have heard her, “descend ! come down ! ‘’tis time.’ I must and will have you on earth, while I present to you Mr. Charles Chesterfield, a young votary of the nine, whom I have every reason to believe deserving that you should look upon him.”

As Mrs. Gibson, notwithstanding the natural powers of her voice, did not wholly trust to it, but laid her hand on Mr. Marchmont’s arm as she spoke, she at length succeeded in arousing his attention.

“ What would you, my dear friend ?” said he, in a whisper, soft as a western breeze.

“ What would I, Marchmont ?” she replied, joining her hands as if in the act of praying. “ This, would I. That you should leave the region of pure and serene air, and inhabit our nether world for some short space, that I may present to you this young man, Mr. Charles Chester-

field, the chosen friend of Mr. Dalrymple, of Ripley-park, whose name you well know, and the *protégé*, or rather, the adopted son of Sir George Meddows, who has just brought him to town as his guest."

Mr. Marchmont, who now evidently heard every word she said, set his heels together, turned out his toes, and holding his eye-glasses in one hand, while he occupied the other in twiddling the chair, he made the nearest approach to a bow permissible to men of his class, that is to say, he bent his head till his chin touched his breast-pin.

Charles bowed too, in an old-fashioned way, and his handsome face spoke an animated wish to cultivate the acquaintance.

Mr. Marchmont laid his glasses with emphasis on Mrs. Gibson's shoulder, and accompanying the action by an expressive glance, the lady comprehended that a *tête-à-tête* was demanded, and accordingly led the way to an isolated sofa at the furthest extremity of the back drawing-room, a locality which seemed admirably suited for the purpose.

“You know I am your slave,” he began, “and that my refusing to make the acquaintance of any one forced upon me by you, is something quite beyond the reach of any conceivable probability. But will you have the excessive kindness to throw some light upon this matter? Why, my beloved Mrs. Gibson, *why* should I receive to my heart this pink and white young gentleman? This rosebud of a youth, with his magnificent gray eyes, and curly hair? Why must I cherish all this? Is it in my way, my dearest Mrs. Gibson?”

“A great deal more in your way than you have any idea of, *amico mio*,” replied the lady, speaking as nearly in a whisper as it was in her nature to do. “This young man is, I will venture to declare, very completely in your way. Of course I don’t mean,” she continued, suddenly checking herself, “of course I don’t mean that he is one of the finest poets and prose writers in Europe—neither do I mean that he is the most influential literary patron in London. You raise those wicked eyebrows of yours, Marchmont, just as if you fancied I was saying

so. But you don't really think any such thing, and, therefore, you may listen to me gravely, and believe what I state. This youth, this Charles Chesterfield, has received a particularly learned education. Such, at least is the statement of Dalrymple to Mr. Gibson, and certainly he is a man to be trusted. But his passion for composition is so strong that he will adopt no profession, and has been brought to London by Sir George Meddows, solely for the purpose of being put forward as an author. It was but last week, you know, that you were telling me I must beat about for contributors, for that your editorial box was not so rich as usual. Did you not, Marchmont? And can any thing appear upon the scene more perfectly *à propos* than this incipient Apollo?"

"You are ever the same!" exclaimed Mr. Marchmont, snatching her hand, and pressing it with much energy, "forgive my petulence, my dearest friend! How perpetually it happens to me, when I am least thinking of it, that I find you

'Still the unseen light,
Guiding my way!'

Yes! I *do* want contributors. Alas! I want many things, dearest friend!—many things absolutely essential. But this is no moment for the unrestrained confidence which I like to bestow upon you—I must ask for another moment—to-morrow morning, perhaps? or the next day? Now we will think only of the young man you wish me to patronize. To say the truth, his learned education is, of itself, no great recommendation to me. My grammar is mankind, my friend; my dictionary is in the clouds. The winds are my syntax, and rushing cataracts my prosody! But the objection is not fatal. More than one of the most chosen spirits of young England—thanked be the Gods! we now can talk of our *young England*, as our bright-soiled neighbours do of their *jeune France*. More than one of these, I have the happiness of knowing, have, at my bidding, thrown aside the worm-eaten toga in which for ages the intellectual strength of the country has been entangled. Depend upon it, my charming friend, learning is to genius what long and heavy drapery would be to Taglioni. To such a mind as yours the

illustration requires no commentary. But to return to this young Chesterfield. I am quite ready to take him by the hand, and will give him an audience either to-morrow morning or as soon afterwards as I can manage to find leisure."

"Would you like to see him here, dear Marchmont? I know that sometimes your room—You men of genius, you know, do sometimes indulge in a little eccentric confusion," said Mrs. Gibson affectionately.

"Ever thoughtful, ever kind!" replied Marchmont. "But no. If this youth is to work for me and with me, I must stand on no ceremony with him. He must see me as I am—and no matter." These last words were uttered in a tone of bitterness which drew a sigh from the lady. "Forgive me! dear and excellent Mrs. Gibson, forgive me! Well I know that did you possess a fairy wand, or any other power by which my poverty could be converted into wealth, the abode of your poor friend would not long be such as to call a blush upon that dear

friendly cheek, at the idea of its being seen by a poor country lad, who seems himself but an object of splendid benevolence. But no more of this!

‘ I know that heaven ordains me here
To run this mortal life’s career ! ’ ”

And, having uttered these words very plaintively, he offered his arm to the lady of the house, and they returned together to the outer drawing-room. Many persons had arrived since they left it, on several of whom Mrs. Gibson bestowed the greatly-prized honour of an introduction to Mr. Marchmont, as soon as the gentleman had reinstated himself in his favourite position, with his elbow on the chimney-piece, and his glasses at his eye. To this honoured spot a succession of persons were led by different members of the family, much in the same manner as they might have been marshalled to the feet of a sovereign; for in most cases no conversation followed, and, having made their bows and courtesies, they passed on, to make room for more.

But at length, no further presentations being

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Mr. Gibbons' Portrait

anticipated, this first-magnitude star of the Gibson galaxy retired to the same isolated sofa in the back drawing-room which had been the scene of his *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Gibson ; when, throwing himself upon it in an attitude of elegant ease, he began talking very decidedly aloud with a fashionable actor, who was almost as great a man as himself. This was a signal to all men, and, better still, to all women, too, that they intended to permit themselves to be made the centre of a circle. Nevertheless, it was of course understood also, that however like a sun, or two suns, they might be in brilliance, it was not intended that they should be the centre of the whole system, which would have been by far too great a tax upon their condescension. On the contrary, it was a part of the family tactics that whenever this species of literary centralization took place in the small drawing-room, a musical centralization was simultaneously to be organized in the large one. Of this, the fair Theodosia was the presiding genius. Not but that Theodosia was literary

too ; but being excessively musical into the bargain, she divided her time between learning as much of Italian as was necessary to her songs, and practising them and their accompaniments on the pianoforte.

This gave her the right to consider herself as *prima donna* in the musical part of the establishment, but also as the Italian scholar, *par excellence*, a double pre-eminence which rendered her of great importance in her own family, as well as throughout the whole extended circle of their acquaintance.

When the accomplished young lady perceived that Mr. Marchmont had forsaken his favourite standing position in the larger room, for his favourite lying position in the smaller one, she immediately uttered the usual note of preparation for a review of her musical forces ; and no sooner did she run her fingers over the instrument, that all the young ladies who had, or fancied they had, a taste for music, fluttered up to the pianoforte ; while all the young gentlemen who could sing a little, or flute a little, or fiddle a little, or turn over a page of music in the

right place, all fluttered after them. And then began a critical survey, for the hundredth time, perhaps, in some instances, of Miss Theodosia's musical library: and there might be heard little indistinct warblings of favourite airs in one place; and there might be seen little graceful white-gloved runnings over of difficult passages—not on the keys, but on the leaves in another. And if young gentlemen wished to flirt, they flirted; and if young ladies wished to whisper, they whispered, unheard by chaperons, and perfectly justified by custom.

While all this was going on, entirely according to rule in one place, display of a higher order was preparing in another. By degrees the startling stare-traps uttered by Mr. Marchmont, and the lively or sentimental rejoinders of his dramatic friend, Mr. Marvel, drew round them all the highest intellect in the company; and then, to biting jest, and high-toned moral satire, were joined philosophical discussion, and some of those noble flights of unrestrained thought, for which Mr. Marchmont was so deservedly celebrated.

On the other corner of the sofa selected by this gentleman as his cathedra for the hour, sat Mrs. Gibson, her long back supported by sundry cushions piled against its elbow, and her admiring eyes turned full upon the singular and very animated countenance of her eloquent friend. Several ladies had drawn chairs forward, so as to form a semi-circle round him, while many others, among whom were the three most pre-eminently intellectual daughters of the house, stood near. Almeria, indeed, the youngest, and, next to her mother, the most enthusiastic of the family, continued to balance her slender person sideways on the back of the sofa, and thereby secured to herself the same advantage of gazing in the speaker's face, as her mamma herself enjoyed. Mr. Marvel, who continued to sustain that distinguished part in the conversation which consists in exciting by seeming opposition the most daring propositions and most startling theories, was stationed exactly behind Mrs. Gibson, amusing himself very gracefully with the tall pole of a screen, which he sometimes seemed to sustain, and sometimes

seemed to sustain him, with an easy elegance that produced an excellent effect. Near to this gentleman, and modestly hid behind him, stood Charles Chesterfield, his whole soul abiding in his eyes and ears, and feeling as if the moments then passing over him were of more value than all the years he had ever lived before. The rest of the listeners sat or stood as accident or convenience dictated ; but as it was an understood thing in the family that Mr. Gibson did not quite belong to the very particularly select committee whose proudest privilege was thus to hang upon the inspired rhapsodies of Mr. Marchmont, he divided himself in about equal portions between the two rooms, and might be seen alternately indicating with his inverted thumb the wonders of both, to such of the company as especially belonged to neither.

“ That you, Marvel, of all men in the world, should doubt the steady undeviating progression of man towards the perfection which some dream of in a divinity, is astonishing !” said Mr. Marchmont, so placing himself as very nearly to

deposit one foot on the sofa, and shading his eyes with his hand as if more steadily to peruse the countenance of the friend he addressed.

“Nay, my friend, you go too fast for me;” replied Mr. Marvel, holding up both hands as if to deprecate the fiery advance of the orator. “I know by experience that it is pretty nearly impossible to listen to you on any theme, without becoming in the end convinced that you are right. But you should have some mercy on those who are too earthly dull, to scale the heavens at a leap, like yourself?”

“Gracious heaven, Marvel! Do you want a logical induction to prove to you that man has within himself the elements of all that constitutes what religionists have erected into a divinity?”

“That might prove a troublesome want, good folks; so you had better take the philosopher’s advice, and do without it if you can,” said a young woman dressed almost like a quaker, who, seated on a very low ottoman on the other side of the chimneypiece, appeared busily en-

gaged in cutting out horses and dogs in paper, by the aid of a pair of waxlights, with a green shade over them.

This interruption caused the conversation to pause for a moment, which might not however have been the case, had not Charles, startled by its unexpected tone, thrust forward his head to look across the chimney-piece, and reconnoitre the speaker.

“ Oh ! for heaven’s sake don’t stop ! ” exclaimed Almeria ; “ it is only Marianne’s fun.”

Mr. Marchmont, indeed, appeared too much at home to take any great notice of so idle an observation, and proceeded.

“ To convince the idea of an intelligence superior to one’s own, is impossible ; and those who affect to do so are false to nature, and to truth. Did I believe in such a doctrine, I would cease to exist within four-and-twenty hours. But I have no faculty within me to lead to such a belief.”

“ Then what a much cleverer fellow the frog was when he looked at the ox,” said Marianne.

“ However, if it saves you from bursting, it is a great blessing.”

“ Magnificent idea !” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson, with a sigh that seemed to relieve the fulness of a heart bursting with admiration, and with her eyes so steadily fixed on the face of the philosopher, as to make it evident that she could not have heard the remark of her malapert daughter. “ How little, how pitiful,” she continued with emotion, “ do the ordinary feelings and opinions of common men appear after words like these ! And to what elevation may not the incommunicable mind hope to attain, when it has power to generate and bring forth thoughts thus challenging divinity ?”

Charles Chesterfield would have given the world to have asked the philosopher for an explanation ; for perfectly certain that he could not really mean what his words seemed to imply, he felt a burning anxiety to discover the hidden sense which the more finished education of the rest of the company evidently revealed to them. But it would have been vastly easier for him to

have construed off-hand the most difficult passage in Pindar, than to have shown forth his doubts and his ignorance in such a presence. He therefore continued to stand, silently gazing on the group before him, and carefully treasuring every word that met his ear, determined, should what followed fail to elucidate what had gone before, to transmit the whole to Mr. Westbrook, nothing doubting that the deep learning of that excellent divine would throw light upon what seemed now to be hid in perfect darkness. In his own heart he believed that Mr. Marchmont was bringing forward some forgotten doctrine of the pro-Platonic school, with which Mr. Westbrook had not thought it necessary to make him acquainted; and though he scrupled not to confess to himself that such notions were idle enough to justify eternal oblivion, he could not help feeling a little vexed, nevertheless, at finding the learning on which he had so prided himself insufficient to help him through the first conversation he had listened to in London, though so many of the weaker sex appeared

capable of comprehending all its abstruse allusions perfectly.

“Marchmont!” cried Mrs. Gibson, suddenly changing the theme, either from the urgent necessity of hearing her own voice, or from the wish to exhibit the versatile powers of her friend, in whose hands, as she well knew, every subject was sure to

“suffer a *sea* change
Into something rich and strange.”

“My dear Marchmont! tell me something more, I entreat you, about that delightful Pendergrass, whose divine poems you reviewed so admirably last week. Conceive! that an American should come and flash upon us in this way like a thunderbolt from heaven! Is it not marvellous?”

“I think not,” replied Mr. Marchmont; “neither will you think so, either, My dear Mrs. Gibson, profoundly enlightened as you are, if you will give the subject a little fair consideration. Is not the fact perfectly analogous to the universal order of nature? whose operations

thank Heaven ! we are beginning to understand, without being obliged to have recourse to persons having their heads thatched with horsehair. *O qual piacem !* as your lovely Theodosia would say, to remember that we have, at last, thrown aside our blinkers, and dare to look around us, without fear of starting !”

“Oh, you erratic comet !” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson, while all the little circle welcomed the charming phrase with an approving smile. “Where have you got to, now ? and what have heads, thatched with horsehair, as you deliciously describe our bygone pedants, to do with the question of American poetry ?”

“An immense deal, charming lady ! an enormous deal !” replied Mr. Marchmont, suddenly sitting upright, and placing the forefinger of his right hand on the thumb of his left, as if about to enumerate a succession of proofs.

“An unknown quantity,” said a clear but very quiet voice from the other side of the fireplace.

Mr. Marchmont fell back into his reclining position.

Mrs. Gibson looked grievously annoyed, and

exchanged a glance with Almeria, who, bending forward till her lips were almost close to the critic's ear, said in a whisper heard by very few beside himself,

“Don't vex mamma by minding her! Go on.”

Remaining still for a moment, not as if silenced, but with an aspect of profound meditation, Mr. Marchmont looked up into the face of the young lady who had spoken to him as if he did not see her, but was looking through the space she occupied to some object far beyond her, and at length said, addressing Mrs. Gibson,

“Did you ever watch the action of a spring, when a weight which is heavily pressed upon it is withdrawn?”

“Oh, yes!” replied the lady, with a sort of volant admiration, that seemed ready to take wing, and fly off in whatever direction he might please to indicate.

“Well, then, you have seen it start up, as if by instinct, with new life and power. Such is the action of long-crushed genius on the other side of the Atlantic at present. Learning, such as pedants teach and schoolmen value, has found

no genial soil in the free, unshackled region of the brave new world. They scorn the long and tedious process by which, till a new light broke in upon us, we sought to distil upon the intellects of each successive race the hoarded thoughts and old-world speculations of those who went before. Absurd ! as if the youthful vigour of each new-born age did not out-value, a hundred and a hundred fold, the musty lucubrations embalmed by superstition, and enshrined in dust, of those who were dead and rotten two thousand years ago ? This pitiable reverence for antiquity is now, happily, passing from the earth for ever ; but as long as it held unbroken sway in Europe, it weighed upon the bright young spirits of America with a sort of intellectual tyranny, in very close analogy to the political chains from which, long ago, praised be the Gods ! they so nobly emancipated themselves. It has taken them another half-century to render their literature as free as their citizens."

"And their negroes," said the tiresome paper-cutter.

"Another half-century," resumed Mr. March-

mont, not appearing to hear her. "But at length the conquest is complete, and the poets of the United States now pour forth their inspired strains, unshackled by any laws, save what themselves have made."

"Admirable!" Is he not rich to-night?" said Mrs. Gibson, aside, to Almeria; but happily in a whisper so distinct, as to be heard by all: and thus encouraged, not a voice failed to murmur, like the timid echoes of softly undulating hills in the distance, "admirable!"

While Mr. Gibson made his way up to the pianoforte, his thumb pointing backwards the whole time, and his head rising and falling in what seemed a very mysterious manner to the uninitiated, but which to the better informed said quite as plainly as any words could have done, "There never was any thing equal to him! No, never in the world;" had not Miss Theodosia herself been in the very act of singing one of Grisi's most difficult songs, it is probable that at least some of the musical circle might have been seduced by these eloquent gesticulations to join themselves to the literary one; but

this particular song was of course a treat that could not be given up, and only three young ladies, and one young gentleman, who had neither been asked to play or to sing, migrated.

“And you think Mr. Pendergrass the first among this emancipated phalanx?” said Mr. Marvel.

“Decidedly,” replied Marchmont.

“Oh! Mr. Marchmont—could you not recite a few stanzas to us?” said Almeria, beseechingly.

“Assuredly, if you wish it, fair girl!” replied the critic, turning his eye, however, upon her more important mamma, to ascertain whether his doing so would accord with her wishes.

“Do you look doubtingly at me, Marchmont?” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson. “Is it indeed possible that you should not know the delight it would give me? My little Almeria and I are generally of one mind in these matters.”

“Be it so, then,” he replied. “I will give you some lines, as yet unpublished, which he sent to me last week, to know if I advised their being added to the new edition. I know not how it

happens, but I never read any very beautiful poetry without its adhering to me, like a part of myself as it were."

"A sort of chemical affinity," said Marianne, looking up from her work, and fixing her eyes for a moment on the face of Mr. Marchmont.

He bowed to her as if greatly flattered, and went on. "I can always repeat what I greatly admire, without making any effort whatever to commit it to memory. The lines I am now going to recite are on a Star, and, in my opinion, show an originality of thought which leads instantly to the conclusion that they are the genuine, unsophisticated product of a new world. They are entitled,

' LINES ON A STAR SEEN AT MIDNIGHT, AFTER DRINKING
TEA WITH A VERY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY.

, ' Bright candle in an everlasting stick !

How soothingly thy trembling rays descend
Upon a heart from o'erwrought feeling sick,
Whose leaping pulses towards madness tend !

' Ah ! I have touched her !—As the temperate bowl,
Innoxious, filled wholly with total tea,
From her hand passed to mine, my phrensied soul
Caught from that touch celestial ecstasy !

‘ Yes ! I have touched her ! Let the golden strings
From whence thy native harp, O glancing Star !
Its soft accords to lessen startless flings,
Sending their music on the winds afar.

‘ Let its sweet notes the blissful truth convey,
In sounds eternal as the theme I sing,
That tea thus handed, with dear coy delay,
Can rapture, such as gods might envy, bring.

‘ And tears shall fall the while. And innocent sighs
Such as babes breathe upon a mother’s breast,
Shall fan the air till the wild fever flies,
Leaving the storm-swept heart once more at rest.’”

As he repeated the last plaintive stanza, the voice of Mr. Marchmont sunk into a still, small whisper, which seemed an echo to the delicate thought it expressed ; one moment of impressive universal silence followed, broken at length by a soft chorus of female sighs, and in one or two instances by that sort of blowing by the nose which accompanies weeping.

“ I ask no stronger proof of the power of this transatlantic genius,” said the critic, throwing up his arms as in triumph, “ than its effect on such an audience as this. I would reject the judgment of the merely learned, I would reject

too the judgment of mere natural feeling, unrefined by an acquaintance with the thrilling literature of the day. But here we have hearts and minds precisely in the state best qualified to pass sentence on the productions of intellect. In truth, I mark it as one of the most promising features in the intellectual aspect of the eventful epoch in which we live, that its literature, however soaring, or however profound, is not of the dry hard nature that tends to indurate our hearts against the passions which constitute the lifeblood of existence. Out on the doctrines of the heavy icebergs, who would make us believe that passion leads to sin! Rather would I, that the green sod should instantly be heaped upon this heaving breast, and crush it at once into eternal sleep, than live with the sparkling current of my blood restrained by precept! — Women! — waxlights! — wine!” he continued, as his widely-opened roving eye fixed itself on a tray containing sundry decanters, sandwiches, and tartlets, which, if a literary dinner had not preceded the evening coterie, always appeared at rather an early hour.—

“These form the atmosphere in which man loves to live!”

“You shall not move, Marchmont!” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson, starting from her reclining posture, and laying her hand upon the great man’s arms; “I never like you so well as when you are lounging upon this dear sofa. Why have tables castors, but to run? Push that table over, some of you. There’s dear creatures! Almeria! step after William, and tell him to bring the liqueur-chest and hot water. Do I not know your wants and wishes, Marchmont?”

“And do you not know how to spoil me, Mrs. Gibson?”

“How is it possible to pet you beyond your deserts, while you minister to our enjoyments as you have done this evening? But tell me, dear friend, is it beyond reach of hope that we should see this gifted Pendergrass here? I have no words to tell how I should feel at beholding the author of those heart-searching words,

‘and innocent sighs,

Such as babes breathe upon a mother’s breast.’

The purity—the elevation of thought—the sweet simplicity—the ineffable tenderness, all combine to lap the spirits in elysium !”

“ And is not that about ‘ *celestial ecstasy* ’ very fine, mamma ?” said Almeria, in a soft murmur, seemingly intended only for her mother’s ear.

“ Admirably, my love. Sit down Miss Fortingale. Mr. Embsby, you can find a corner there by Almeria. The Marvel must not be separated from the Marchmont. They are flint and steel to each other. Oh ! there is more room yet at this dear little table ! It is positively elastic, and has an especial propensity to stretch itself at the approach of talent.”

“ Does it shrink, mamma, before the want of it ?” said Marianne, rising. “ At any rate, there is no room for me ;” and so saying, she took up the shaded stand which held her two waxlights, and walked off.

Meanwhile such of the party as modestly deemed themselves not sufficiently gifted to produce a favourable effect upon the elastic table, silently withdrew themselves to the other room ; and some others edged in the corner of a chair,

and one leg, in order to show that they were of those for whom the little sentient table was sure to be large enough. Poor Charles alone seemed at a loss to know where to go, or what he ought to do. The effort of walking from the corner wherein he had hitherto stood ensconced, and passing conspicuously round the bright constellation which surrounded the magic table, was greatly too much for his courage; yet to stay and listen, unlicensed, to all the wit and wisdom about to flash in rapid coruscations from the stars which formed it, was not to be thought of! His conscience told him that in acting thus, he should be little better than a thief, who, "from a shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in his pocket." His embarrassment was most painful, and gladly would he at that moment have exchanged all the glories of Mrs. Gibson's back drawing-room, for a seat on the bank of turf in the orchard at Maplebury, beside his own little humble worshipper, Bessy.

Whether his shyness or his honour would have got the better in this struggle had it been continued, can never be known; for Marchmont,

on accidentally turning his head, perceived him, and immediately put an end to it by saying,

“My dear friend, you have forgotten our young stranger ! Now then, put your table to the proof, and bid it stretch itself to make room for him.”

This command was instantly obeyed ; and with the more promptitude, perhaps, because it was quite out of the common way for Mr. Marchmont, while enjoying the petting of which he had boasted, to give himself any trouble about the accommodation of others ; his sagacious friend therefore immediately suspected that her favourite had some especial reason for this remarkable condescension. Nor was she in any degree mistaken.

Marchmont, while his eye seemed directed only towards Marvel, had not failed to observe the ardent, eager, admiring gaze of the young head, peeping from behind him. It was precisely the expression he loved best to see in those who listened to him. Moreover, he had not forgotten that the youth had been presented to him as one vehemently desirous of seeing

himself in print, and likewise as being blessed with friends and protectors whose names seemed to promise profitable patronage.

Charles Chesterfield, therefore, not only found himself honoured beyond the reach of hope, by obtaining a seat near the elastic table, but was asked to drink wine by Mr. Marchmont himself, and more than once felt the great man's eagle glance upon him, as he listened to the wonders of his eloquence.

CHAPTER VII.

A Tête-à-tête, and its result—Charles Chesterfield grows Manly and Independent.

ACCORDING to the general invitation, or rather order, which he had received, Charles Chesterfield made his appearance very punctually at Sir George Meddows's breakfast-table on the following morning. Miss Meddows was the only one of the family who had as yet entered it, and she received the young man's bashful salutation with more condescension and civility than she had yet shown him. She even put aside the book she was reading, as if to converse with him. But though he saw this,

and felt quite certain that he ought to say something, he could not manage it. No single word occurred to him, that he thought proper and fitting for the occasion; and he therefore stood before her, blushing like a rosebud, and as silent as the tomb.

This was not what the young lady intended; and she therefore, after desiring him to seat himself, addressed him with a smile of so much sweetness, that could he have been left alone the moment after, with pen, ink, and paper, it is probable he would have produced something or other, upon lips and eyes, more spirited than all he had ever written on these inspiring subjects before. But it was many minutes before all this gentle condescension produced on Charles the effect intended; or, in other words, it was long before the young man dared trust his nerves with the sound of his own voice.

At length, however, upon Clara's asking him if he still thought he should find any thing in the gloomy streets of London, to atone for the pure air and green fields he had left behind,

such an effect followed, as showed she had touched that point in his character, where the shyness of rustic breeding was overpowered by a stronger feeling. It was like finding at last the secret spring by whose agency alone some hidden treasure can be brought to view, when, after in vain touching here, and pressing there, the right spot being found at last, out starts the hoarded wealth before the seeker's eyes.

"Atone!" reiterated Charles, totally unconscious of the freedom required to justify such an echo-like mode of colloquy. "Miss Meddows! Should I ever be driven to consider the country, its blue sky, and its green fields, its scented blossoms—which in truth I fondly love—and its balmy air, should I, Miss Meddows, be ever forced to consider these as blessings only to be enjoyed by sacrificing those which have already opened before me in London, I should learn to tremble at their name, and shudder at every idle image of rural beauty which memory might suggest."

Not only the words, but the manner of this vehement speech, startled the young lady con-

siderably. The countenance of Charles Chesterfield, though as yet a little too blooming in its sunny freshness to suggest any idea of great refinement, was, nevertheless, exceedingly handsome. Though with no pretensions whatever to be accounted as one of those "sublime sort of Newton-faced men" for whom some ladies are inclined to feel a decided partiality, he had fine regular features, and, better still, considerable power of expression; so that when looking at him, as Clara Meddows did at that moment, while his whole soul was in his eyes, and the most genuine enthusiasm animating his countenance, it was impossible not to acknowledge that he was both handsome and intelligent. She felt surprised, and probably looked so; for without quite losing the animation which had for a while so completely overthrown his timidity, he added, "Forgive me, Miss Meddows! I did not mean to frighten you by the impetuous expression of my feelings, and nothing but the great kindness of your manner could have led me to express them at all. It is difficult, I believe, amidst circumstances so very

new as those in which I find myself, to speak of one's real feelings without falling into this error."

"Sincerity can never be an error, Mr. Chesterfield," she replied, "but I should betray the want of it, did I not confess that I still feel doubtful of the wisdom of your preference of the town to the country."

"I, too, love sincerity, Miss Meddows," he rejoined, very ingenuously, "and it is for that very reason that I own so freely the preference I avow. It seems to myself almost unnatural that a few, a very few hours, spent with a man of extraordinary intellect, should make me feel for him as I do. I would rather cultivate this man's society, though the doing so should condemn me to find my home where I could never see the sun, than be debarred from association and fellowship with him and his, though I should gain thereby the brightest heaven and the purest air that God ever gave to man."

All this, though uttered very rapidly, was not got through without abundance of blushes, and such vehement palpitation of the heart as

he had never felt before. "Whether for good or for evil," thought Clara, "it is clear that this poor youth is destined to fret his hour upon the stage to which my father has transported him! Can it be," and the idea brought with it such pleasure as made her eagerly cherish it,—“can it be that in this business I have mistrusted my poor father wrongfully? Can it be that, having no such vile thoughts as I suspected, he has seen in this boy that which I see now? If so, he may have been led solely by his habitual love of speculation to invite him hither, in the belief that he really had talents which might push their way to fortune.”

For the moment which it took for these meditations to pass through the active brain of Clara, her companion remained with his eyes almost unconsciously fixed on her face; for, as her own bright glances were for the interval settled upon the carpet, he was so far enabled to forget himself and his timidity as to look steadily at her, which, in truth, he had never done before, having ever turned his own eyes from encountering hers, with the startled shy-

ness of a young leveret, who bounds away in terror the instant he encounters a human glance.

But now that at last he did really venture to contemplate her face, wonder seemed to conquer fear, and a feeling made up of curiosity and admiration, caused him to speculate as he gazed upon the possibility of approaching to such a degree of acquaintance with her as might enable him to submit to the "divine intelligence" he read upon her brow, the outpouring of his muse. The sudden start which her looking up occasioned, might have convinced her, had she thought about it, that his reverie had been as active as her own; but the new and very pleasant view which she had now taken of the young man's sudden introduction to the family, made her too anxious to atone to her father, in the person of his guest, for the evil thoughts with which she charged herself, to permit her to remark it; and with still increased friendliness of manner, she said, "And who was it, Mr. Chesterfield, who pleased you so greatly at Mrs. Gibson's party last night?"

"It was Mr. Marchmont," he replied, colouring with eagerness, and literary pride, at having such a name to mention.

Had Clara cared a little more about Charles Chesterfield, she would have heaved a sigh perhaps at hearing this name; but, as it was, she only knit her beautiful brows the least in the world, and replied,

"Oh! the editor of the *Regenerator*."

"Yes, I believe that is the name of the work. I know he is editor of a weekly publication in very high estimation. Mr. Gibson was kind enough to whisper this to me, but I did not catch the name very distinctly."

"The *Regenerator* is his paper," rejoined the young lady, "at least if you are right as to the name of the gentleman."

"In that I am sure I have made no mistake," replied Charles eagerly, "for it was repeated very often. Do you know him, Miss Meadows?"

"No, I do not," was the reply.

Charles longed to tell her that if her charming countenance did not belie the soul within,

the sooner she made the acquaintance the better; but even had he had the boldness to utter such a speech, there was no time for it, for at that moment Mrs. Longuéville entered, and in a minute after, Sir George Meddows himself.

Mrs. Longuéville's first movement on seeing young Chesterfield, was a very stiff one; which even before it had passed away, was singularly enough contrasted with the bland smile which the recollection of her brother's instructions concerning him produced.

"Good morning, Mr. Chesterfield," said she, in mood the second. "We quite missed you at breakfast yesterday." Then sweeping past him, and placing her cheek close to that of Clara, as if to receive half a French salute, she whispered in her ear, "What an incredible bore!" in mood the first.

"That's right, Charles! we have got you again, have we?" cried Sir George, joyously saluting the shoulders of the young man with his spread hand, as he entered. "Are you not a fine fellow? and did I not prophesy rightly? Just one day and a quarter in London, and two

invitations already ! Ring the bell, Clara—I am famishing—settling accounts ever since nine this morning.”

Charles flew to the bell with new-born alacrity, of which Clara’s condescension was the mother. She bowed to him as she placed herself at the table, while her father exclaimed,

“ Oh, to be sure—I had forgot—that is quite right, Charles—nature has made you a genius, and we must make you a gentleman.”

Poor Charles coloured deeply at his implied deficiencies ; but the coffee and rolls entered, every one became occupied, and he felt almost at ease as he half bowed, half nodded, a smiling assent to Clara, when she held out a cup, and said,

“ Sugar, Mr. Chesterfield ?”

“ We have a dinner to-day, haven’t we ?” demanded Sir George.

“ Yes, papa, the Wilmots, Beaumonts, and Wakefields were invited for to-day, before we left town at Easter—and,” pulling out from her bag a little ivory tablet, “ Lord Icelington, Captain Tolwell, and Sir William Crawley also.”

“Does not Dalrymple dine here?” asked Sir George, sharply. “I hope you have neither of you been rude to him? It struck me that he went away very early last night. You do not think he is affronted at any thing, Amelia, do you?”

“Indeed, no!” replied Mrs. Longuéville. “I think it is quite too impossible. I am sure you are always kindness itself to him, Sir George.”

“And I would have every body else kindness itself to him,” returned the baronet. “What on earth, Clara, could induce you to omit sending him a card for to-day?”

“It was not omitted, papa,” said Miss Meadows, colouring, “and I dare say he intends to dine here.”

“Upon my word, Clara, for a girl so thoroughly well brought up as you have been, you have the very oddest way of doing and saying things; but it’s no matter—if the invitation was sent, it is all very well. Chesterfield, here is an egg, if you like to have it—I shall not

eat another. I say, Charles, what do you mean to do with yourself to-night?"

"I know of nothing for to-night, Sir George."

"No? that's unlucky, too; because, my dear fellow, you'll observe it is rather a particular sort of party that I expect here to-day, and I don't think it would suit you to be one of them at all. You would find it a monstrous bore—such formal quizzes! But I'll tell you what you can do though, and no bad notion either—you shall stick to the solidities at luncheon to-day—there's always mutton-chops, or beef-steaks, or something of that sort you know, about two o'clock—and then, if you have a mind, you can go into the pit of one of the playhouses to-night. I'll ask Dalrymple to let his valet go with you—he is out of livery, you know, and a very decent fellow to look at, with a fifty times smarter-looking coat, my dear boy, if the truth must be spoken, than your own, Charles."

Miss Meddows coloured, and cast a glance at her father that certainly did not speak appro-

bation. Charles Ghesterfield, too, changed countenance—but this time it was no blush of shyness that altered his complexion. He became considerably paler than usual; and as he remembered how very little the lessons or the converse of the good vicar had prepared him for the companionship of grooms, he was strongly urged by the best part of the spirit within him, to sacrifice all the hopes which the protection of Sir [George fostered, by boldly telling him that his proposal showed such ignorance of the gentle craft to which, though with all humility, he conceived himself to belong, that the only way to answer it was, by withdrawing himself from his presence for ever. How far such a reply might have affected the future destiny of the young man, it is impossible to say; for it was not written in the book of fate that it should be spoken. From her father, the eyes of Miss Meddows turned upon Charles, and there was enough of sympathy in their expression both to sooth his anger and satisfy his pride. He returned the glance by one that said very plainly, “I thank you,” and

then his colour again changed, and once more with the glowing cheeks of a country lad, whose shyness left no power either to resent or to reason, he replied,

“No thank you, sir, I had rather stay at home—in my own lodgings I mean,” he added quickly, “for I wish to spend this evening in writing to my family.”

“That’s very well then,” said his patron, perfectly satisfied; and after a little unmeaning talk between the brother and sister, for Clara did not speak another word, the breakfast-table broke up, Sir George retiring to his library, Mrs. Longuéville to her boudoir, and Clara to a small third drawing-room which was held to be very sacredly her own. Sir George was the first to leave the room, and before Mrs. Longuéville had quite followed him, Clara, who alone had not yet risen from her chair, said, “Mr. Chesterfield, before you go out, let me have the pleasure of introducing you to my morning sitting-room. If you have made no other engagement for two o’clock, I can give you a ticket for the Royal Institution, where

you would hear a lecture that would, I think, interest you."

Mrs. Longuéville stood still as soon as her niece began to speak; and therefore heard, as the young lady intended she should, every word she said. Charles replied with equal simplicity and earnestness, "I am very much obliged to you."

"Come then!" added Clara, "and I will show you the way to my sanctum."

So saying, she rose, and slipped on, Charles following her; while Mrs. Longuéville, her eyes wide open in unmitigated astonishment, stood aside to let them pass, exclaiming in an undertone, "*Incroyable!*"

Arrived in her sitting-room with her surprised but greatly flattered companion, Miss Meddows neither seated herself nor invited her guest to be seated; but having given him the promised ticket, and explained to him the nature of the institution, she took from her bookshelves a very conveniently-arranged map of London, which a sharp-witted observer might perhaps have guessed from its evidently

untouched condition, had been procured on purpose, and pointing out with very patient goodnature the situation of Albemarle-street, and its relative position both as to Bruton and South Molton streets, said, "This map will, I think, enable you, with very little trouble, to find your way about London. Do keep it, Mr. Chesterfield. Good morning."

It was very judicious, and quite right in the young lady, to make the ceremony of dismissal thus clear; for the feeling of fear, very nearly amounting to dislike, which Charles had previously conceived towards the haughty-looking beauty, was fast melting away before her pitying kindness; and instead of wishing to get out of her way as speedily as possible, as heretofore, he would very fain have sat down once more in her presence, and led her to speak again as she had spoken in the morning. But there was no danger that he should mistake her farewell for a permission to stay, neither did he; but after silently holding the ticket and the map in his hand for one moment, as if meditating how much he might express of the

feelings that filled his heart, he said, with a *naïveté* that well became him, "Indeed, and indeed, this is very kind of you, Miss Meadows!"

It *was* very kind, and seasonably so, for without this agreeable circumstance the day would have been very shapeless and very melancholy to poor Charles. As it was, he did very well; not troubling the substantial luncheon of Sir George, which would have interfered with the lecture, but with a spirit of independence, of which he felt rather proud, he entered a shop as he returned from Albemarle-street, whose window showed forth the promise of a dinner, and then returned to his lodgings with a sufficient stock of pleasant meditations and happy feelings, to last him till he went to bed. One subject, and certainly not the least important, of these meditations, was the promised notice from Mr. Marchmont, respecting the time when it would suit that gentleman's convenience to grant him the hoped-for interview, for the purpose of discussing the great subject of his literary hopes and wishes.

But though the day wore away without his receiving this, Charles bore the delay extremely well. He really did wish to write to his mother, and to Bessy, and to his venerable friend, Mr. Westbrook, and as he had much more to tell than his promised frank could possibly contain, the employment, while it lasted, was such as very effectually to chase away every feeling of *ennui*. Moreover, there had been much in Mr. Faraday's lecture to employ his mind in a manner altogether new to him, and the pleasant remembrance of Miss Meddows's altered manner so completely filled up every interval, that, instead of finding the hours lag, he was greatly surprised when he heard his landlady's clock, on the staircase, strike eleven.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Marchmont remembers Charles Chesterfield, but is compelled by the iron hand of necessity to remember himself first—Another Tête-à-tête, which also produces its results.

MR. MARCHMONT, meantime, had not forgotten the *fresh-looking* young man whose admiration of him had been so evident. But notwithstanding the elevated nature of this gentleman's extraordinary mind, he was too much a man of business to involve himself in any literary transactions with the young stranger before he had made himself better acquainted with all circumstances concerning him.

To obtain such information, as well as to indulge himself in one of those hours of confidential conversation with which Mrs. Gibson occasionally honoured him, Mr. Marchmont asked and obtained permission to wait upon her the morning after her party.

In most London dwellings, the back-parlour belongs pretty exclusively to the master of the house, either as library or litter-room, as the case may be; but in the Gibson family it was otherwise, for it belonged *quite* exclusively to the mistress of it. It was here that she carried on the great work of her life: a work which was indeed the crowning glory of the whole Gibson race, distinguishing it most decidedly from all other races, and giving to the name, as she herself expressed it, an enduring species of celebrity, which it was delightful to remember would be advantageous to her posterity when her own frail existence should be closed in death.

“I am making,” she was wont to say, “an European reputation for every one who bears the name of Gibson; and it is this considera-

tion which enables me to persevere in an enterprise which might shake the boasted courage of many of the stouter sex !”

In a word, the sacred back-parlour in Baker-street was the scene of all Mrs. Gibson’s labours for the illustration of her celebrated copy of the “Paradise Lost.” Unlike most other apartments of similar locality, it had been metamorphosed into the likeness of a boudoir, for the lady’s use. Paper had taken the place of paint upon the walls ; tall horsehair-bottomed chairs had made way for low ottomans, and for Greek and Roman *reposoirs* of all sorts and sizes. One large substantial table had been shivered, as it should seem, into half-a dozen little ones while sober red moreen had melted into delicate chintz, lined with rose-colour ; bookshelves had sunk into *chiffonnières*, and a massive old portrait of Mr. Gibson’s great-grandfather which formerly surmounted the chimneypiece, had retired before a host of his miniature descendants, all sparkling in golden frames, bedecked with vine-leaves.

But, notwithstanding all these pretty “*femi-*

nalities," there was one spot in the room that had a sort of mysterious homeliness, which, if any one unacquainted with the secret had been permitted to enter the apartment, must have greatly puzzled him. These, however, were but few, and the well-informed knew that the green cloth curtain, suspended at the height of six feet across a portion of the room which included one window, concealed the deal board at which Mrs. Gibson performed the more laborious portion of her noble task, together with her gum-pots and brushes, her paper-shavings, and her heavy shears, her apron, her towels, and aught else that to the illustrator's art belongs. For the expense attending the collecting her illustrations had obliged her, at a very early stage of the undertaking, to perform the labour of mounting with her own hands.

Mrs. Gibson was behind the shelter of this curtain when Mr. Marchmont was announced; but, though she came forth from its shelter with an engraving from the antique in her hand, which some one had remarked to her strongly resembled the poet's description of

Adam, it would have been evident to any one well acquainted with her, that she was dressed not so much with a view to pasting and gumming, as to appearing before her chosen friend with all the advantages that a morning toilet could give. She was still, notwithstanding her age, in every sense of the phrase, a woman *à prétention*, and she certainly did in all ways very much value Mr. Marchmont's admiration. There are, indeed, so very few people who think it worth their while to compliment a lady of near fifty on her personal perfections, that where such a one is found, he is generally very fully "prized at his worth," particularly if it happens, as in the case of Mrs. Gibson, that admiration of all kinds is very affectionately valued.

A truly platonic attachment between a lady and a gentleman is doubtless a fine spectacle; and where its purity can admit of no manner of question, it can hardly fail of being contemplated with delight.

"Ah, Marchmont! my presentiment did not deceive me!" said the lady, advancing to him

with an extended hand. "I believe I should know your knock amidst a million!"

"How like you is that thought!" replied the gentleman, taking her hand, and leading her to the couch she usually occupied. "Never, surely, was there a heart so exquisitely formed for friendship as your own! Every nerve, every pulse, every look, every word, is replete with the delicious balm! dearest, dearest Mrs. Gibson!"

And having seated himself beside her, he placed his hands upon his eyes, while the lowness of the couch led him to support his elbows on his knees, and he remained for a minute or two perfectly silent, and, indeed, to all appearance weeping.

"My dear Marchmont, how is this? What ails you, my most valued friend? Why this emotion, Marchmont?"

"Well may you ask. It must, indeed, seem strange to you! You do not—you cannot understand it! But the most delicious feature in your character is, that sweet trustfulness which never permits suspicion to mix itself with doubt.

How many are there who, on witnessing emotions they cannot understand, invariably suspect some faulty cause to be the source of them. But you!—I have no words—I never did, nor ever shall find words to express the admiration, the gratitude, the tenderness with which your character inspires me.”

And, suddenly changing his position, he seized her hand with uncontrollable emotion, and pressed it to his lips.

“Ah, foolish friend!” replied Mrs. Gibson, gaily, and playfully giving him a gentle box on the ear, as soon as her hand was released; “I will not have you give way to this sort of thing. You are out of spirits, my poor Marchmont, and this leads you to a degree of thoughtless demonstration that is not good for you, my dear friend. Did I not know you, as I *do* know you, what might I not think? Come, come, no more of this! you have positively made me feel as foolish as a child—I am ashamed of it—I am, indeed!”

“Ah! do not chide your own dear gentle nature!” he replied, in a tone of almost re-

proachful deprecation. "What think you would be the destiny of spirits such as mine, if woman shut her heart to sympathy? Yet, mistake me not—perfect, all perfect as you are, mistake me not! Conceive not, I implore you, that in speaking of the sympathy of woman, I mean the childish softness of a puling girl. To a soul like mine, there is no charm in this. No! For me to feel consolation from a woman's friendship, it is necessary, absolutely necessary, that she should have a mind completely developed. With faculties in full-grown perfection, and a steadfast heart, that knows itself, nor trembles to confess that it can feel. Heaven has no blessing like such a friend as this—earth no joy like that she has the power to bestow."

There was naturally a pause at the end of this speech. In fact, whenever any very high-wrought and sublime emotions are uttered, by persons like Mr. Marchmont and Mrs. Gibson, it is absolutely necessary that a pause should follow. It is not only good in itself, being often, indeed, more expressive than any language, but it acts in a wonderful manner upon

what has gone before, sublimating what was trivial, softening what was abrupt, and in fact permitting each party in the dialogue to fill up the spoken sketch of the soul's feelings, according to their own heart's content.

It was, on this occasion, Mrs. Gibson who first broke the impressive silence.

"Marchmont!" she said, "you are the only being living who ever thoroughly understands me. I am sought and esteemed by many friends, perhaps beloved by some—but alas! how graceless is the heart in these matters! Neither the world, nor the world's law, however strictly we may wish to follow it, can keep the erratic soul from roaming where it list. In short—but let us quit this theme, my poor friend; we know not whither such speculations may lead us. Believe me, it is wisest, best, on some occasions, not to turn the mind's eye too searchingly inward:

' No more

Enthusiast! do we soar:

This sweetly maddening dream of soul

May hurry us beyond the goal!"

And then, withdrawing the hand which Mr. Marchmont had seized at the moment when he was describing the particular sort of ladies of whom he wished to make friends, she added,

“Come! let us talk a little about Mr. Pendergrass. He is your friend, and he shall do you a friend’s service, by rousing you from the state of almost morbid sensibility, into which those languid eyes but too plainly tell me you have fallen. Say, Marchmont, do you often see this highly-gifted man?”

A very deep sigh preceded Mr. Marchmont’s reply to this; but at length he said, with somewhat of a fretful accent, “Oh dear, yes! I see him very often, of course.”

“It is a great privilege, Marchmont!—whether it were that your most peculiar manner of recitation gave the charm, or that the lines themselves were indeed most exquisite, I hardly know: but to me there appeared a depth of feeling and a force of thought in the verses you spoke last night, which are very rarely found combined in any other. I wish you would bring him here, my dearest friend.”

“I will do that, or any thing else that you will bid me do. But to be quite frank with you—it is a fact that you will not like his verses so well, if he recites them himself. However, his coming here may be desirable, if you and Almeria, and all the rest of you take care to make it known that all his best things are sent to *The Regenerator*.”

“Of course, dearest Marchmont! Fear not my memory there. You will bring him then on my next Tuesday? I own it will give me pleasure.”

“Yes. In your case, my charming Mrs. Gibson, there can be no objection to this; for so admirably do you arrange your *soirées*, that scarcely a word is heard but may be recorded on both sides of the Atlantic with advantage to you and yours. But you are aware, I suppose, of Pendergrass’s peculiarity? I feel it absolutely a matter of duty to mention it.”

“No, indeed. I have never seen him, you know, and have not the slightest idea to what you allude,” returned Mrs. Gibson, looking rather terrified.

“Nay, to you it could certainly never be injurious. On the contrary, indeed, as your friendship for me so frequently leaves it in my power to lead the conversation here, I am by no means certain that the circumstance of which I speak may not be highly desirable. The fact is, however, that Pendergrass has adopted the habit, which I believe he considers to be most legitimately a literary one, of printing and publishing whatever he hears and sees in society.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson, either feeling or effecting great alarm.

“Nay, my sweet friend, there is nothing to frighten *you* in this.”

“I don’t know, Marchmont,” she replied, with trembling emotion. “To a woman whose feelings are so overpowering as mine, whose heart, I fear me, is in her eyes, and who, when animated by conversation, thinks only of the person she addresses, or the subject they discuss—to such a one, Marchmont, it must surely be dangerous to be so keenly noted.”

“Should I not watch over you?” demanded Mr. Marchmont, in an accent of tender reproach.

“Then bring him,” she replied, laying her hand gently on his arm, and fixing her eyes on his with a look that seemed to say, “Forgive me!” Then added, in a whisper hardly audible, “If you see no objection, there can be none.”

Having again kissed the lady’s fingers, Mr. Marchmont rose rather abruptly from his seat, and paced the apartment with a sort of hasty and unequal step, which unequivocally spoke agitation. Mrs. Gibson watched him for a minute or two, and then she also became rather agitated, and, it may be, did not exactly know what her dear friend was going to say next; but, after making about five turns and a half in this alarming manner, he stopped short immediately opposite to her, and said,

“Yet, after all, my beloved friend! I came not hither this morning to talk of Pendergrass. Alas! there is a subject that was wont to touch you nearer. Ah! let me not find you changed?”

“What mean you, Marchmont? Speak!” she replied, turning her eyes from his face upon the ground.

“May I speak, sweet friend! and be quite

sure to find you still, still the same? Still my own dearest, best-loved friend?"

"Gracious Heaven! Can you doubt it? What is it that you came prepared to say? Speak, Marchmont! Speak! Your manner makes me tremble."

"My most dear Mrs. Gibson!" he replied solemnly, and reseating himself beside her, "I come to speak to you of—myself!"

"And is that a theme, Marchmont, on which you can doubt my willing ear?" demanded the lady, plaintively, but with recovered composure.

"I should indeed be a wretch if I could think so," he replied, striking his forehead with exactly that degree of vehemence which always gives rise to inquietude in a tender female breast, lest the brow, or the hand, or both, should be the worse for the concussion.

"Be tranquil, Marchmont! For Heaven's sake speak not, act not with this vehemence," she said; "you know not how you shake me! Tell me gently, tell to your best and truest friend what heavy sorrow lies upon your heart. Have I the power to aid you, Marchmont?"

“Alas ! I know not—and that doubt tortures me.”

Again Mrs. Gibson looked alarmed. “I know I may trust your principles—your true affection Marchmont,” she said. “You have taught me to feel assured of this, even in the most trying moments, and therefore I scruple not to declare, that you shall not find the friendship I have so often pledged to you, wanting—ask what—ask any thing you will !”

“Can you lend me twenty pounds !” he cried, mournfully, and once more taking her hand in his. “Can you, my friend ? Can you do this ? Speak ! my very life hangs on your answer.”

“Your life, Mr. Marchmont ? Good gracious ! how can that be ?” replied Mrs. Gibson, in a tone certainly a good deal changed.

“I see it—I feel it !—I know it !” cried the impassioned gentleman, again starting from his seat, and resuming his long stridings across the room. “I looked to find an angel, and lo ! a mortal answers me ! I am a fool ! Aye, children may point at me ! That I, I who have for years bent all the force of my genius to dive

into the secret depths of the human heart, that I should have been ever hoodwinked thus! Good morning, Mrs. Gibson," he added, with the enforced composure of one who taxes his strength to the utmost, in order to subdue feelings that are too mighty for him. "Good morning! all happiness attend you! It may be that we shall not meet again. If so," and here his voice perceptibly faltered,—“if so, never quite forget me. I have faults, great and manifold; but there is something here,” laying his hand on his heart, “there is something here that should plead for me!—at least to you!” And so saying, he turned away, and moved towards the door with a hurried and faltering step.

“Stay! Marchmont! stay!” exclaimed Mrs. Gibson, starting up, and vehemently laying hold upon him. “This precipitation is equally cruel and unwise. Nay, you shall not go! How could you so mistake me! What have I done, what said, to justify your doubts? Presuming that I have not twenty pounds in the world that I can at this moment lay my hands upon, without my—I mean without any body’s

being applied to for it, does it thence follow that my heart is false to friendship?—or that I am not ready with all the little aid I can?” And as she spoke, Mrs. Gibson drew from her pocket a small bunch of little Bramah-looking keys.

These last words, or the act which accompanied them—or both, seemed in some degree to still the tempest which raged within him, and Mr. Marchmont turned upon her a look of so much melancholy gentleness, that her heart quite melted within her as she gazed upon him.

“Dear Marchmont!” she exclaimed anew, with all her wonted pleasure in the name. “That look is your own again! Never let me see you more with such an aspect as you wore but now, I cannot stand it!” And Mrs. Gibson laid down the little Bramah-looking keys upon the table, and drew out her pocket-handkerchief, in which she buried her face, while her breast heaved convulsively.

“Enchanting friend! Sweet softness!” cried Mr. Marchmont, hastily. “But lose not time. These moments are most precious to me! And,

beyond all else, remember—just now you seemed about to name your husband. Hear me, my precious, dearest, confidant ! Hear me, and remember, the confidence reposed by friendship is the most sacred trust that man can give, or woman can receive ! Remember this—and let no human eye peep at my hidden sorrows, save only hers whose privilege it is to read every secret of my soul.” As he uttered these impressive words, Mr. Marchmont took up the little keys and placed them in the hand of his friend.

Mrs. Gibson immediately took the hint, and without further delay opened the drawer of a secretary-table, and drew thence both a pocket-book and a purse.

“Sit down beside me, Marchmont, for a moment,” said she, “that I may tell you exactly how I am situated. Mr. Gibson is really very kind and liberal ; but our expenses are enormously large, and therefore it often happens that money which he gives me solely for my personal expenses goes to pay some clamorous tradespeople, whose long-standing bills, I know, cannot be immediately paid by

him. This is the reason why at this moment I have but eleven pounds and a few shillings in my privy purse ; but if this trifle can be useful to you, my dear friend, need I say that you will make me most happy by taking it? Need I tell you that it is already yours, more than ever it was my own ?”

It would perhaps be superfluous to follow the history of this transaction any further. Few will doubt that the offering was accepted, or that a good deal of hand-kissing and benediction followed it. This ended, the pocket-book and purse locked up again, and the parties reseated with tolerable composure on the sofa, the conversation turned on Charles Chesterfield, and the possible use that might be made of his devotion to the muses.

“It will suit me exceedingly well,” said Mr. Marchmont, “to have a youth in my employ of his very excitable temperament. I marked the effect of all I said on him last night, and if he rhymes or writes in any way with facility, I am persuaded that I shall be able to make him exceedingly useful ; for it is quite evident that he

would be perfectly contented to listen to my thoughts, and to indite them from morning till night. Those are the sort of contributors I like. It renders the moral tone of the work more homogeneous, yet admits of every variety of style. But there is one thing concerning this youth which I must leave in charge with you, my dearest friend, to discover for me—begging you to remember that it is of the most vital importance that I should obtain correct information concerning it. Can you learn for me, by means of your acquaintance with the ladies of the Meddows family, whether the young man is under circumstances of pecuniary pressure? That he will be ultimately paid—that is, if he produces any thing deserving payment—you will not, of course, my dear friend, for a moment doubt; but from peculiar circumstances in my affairs, it will be a great convenience to me to delay the payment a little. Do you think you could get this information for me? • could you learn whether it is probable that he will bother me about payment?”

“Almeria can, I have no doubt. She makes

a prodigious fuss about her friendship for Miss Meddows, and is, I know, going to call upon her in a day or two," replied Mrs. Gibson with zealous eagerness.

"That will do excellently well. Your sweet Almeria, who, by the way, is the only one of your family who I can allow to be called in the slightest degree like you,—Almeria is always my friend. And now we are on that theme, my very-dearest Mrs. Gibson, I will venture to say a word or two to you concerning your daughter, Marianne. I really wish you would use your maternal influence to check the sort of sarcastic humour in which she sometimes indulges. I do assure you, it is very disagreeable to me, trifling and unimportant as it may appear."

"I grieve to hear you say so, my dear Marchmont; for to tell you the honest truth, I do not very well know how to prevent it. That her manners, particularly to you, are perfectly detestable, I am quite ready to allow; but they say, you know, that there are secrets in all families, and there is something a little of that sort respecting Marianne. We never mention

the circumstance, because we think it would be a disadvantage to her sisters, but Marianne, unfortunately, is perfectly independent of us all. An uncle of Mr. Gibson's having taken a fancy to her, when she was a child, most injudiciously left her twenty thousand pounds entirely at her own disposal—which, as Mr. Gibson's estate unhappily goes to the male heir, is quite as much as her four sisters will have between them. It is very provoking that the stupid old gentleman should have fixed upon her instead of Almeria, for she is totally without talent of any kind, and so full of old-fashioned notions about what is right and what is wrong, that she disapproves of every thing we do or say. One of her absurd fancies is, that she wants us to live all the year round in the country. Imagine! But, notwithstanding all this, she pays four hundred a-year for her board, so of course I cannot scold her and school her as I would another girl. I find the best way is to take very little notice of any thing she says, for she is so queer sometimes that if we

did not pretend not to hear her, it would be almost impossible to avoid quarrelling."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" said Mr. Marchmont.

"Yes, indeed. Is it not a pity?" replied Mrs. Gibson.

"I wonder, my dear friend, that you never mentioned this fact to me before," said the Regenerator, musingly. "It might have made an important difference in the tone of my reception by her."

"We never mention it to any body, dear Marchmont, never!" returned the lady, with great earnestness. "We think it quite a duty not to do it."

"But am I *any* body?" said Mr. Marchmont, in a tone of deep feeling, and fixing on her an appealing look that went to her very heart.

"Ah! you are right! But you see I have told you now! With you, Marchmont, I can have no intentional concealments," was the penitent reply.

“ Now then, farewell ! Make your Almeria understand her commission, best and dearest ! I shall not appoint the young man to call till I know the result of it. You will not neglect this. I know you will not.”

Having said this he departed, leaving Mrs. Gibson, in a flutter of spirits that made the retirement of her ‘study’ extremely desirable, though not even the sedative influence of guaranteed repose could for some time restore the calmness and tranquil self-possession which she felt it her duty to assume.

CHAPTER IX.

The Gibson Estimates of Clara Meddows—A Confidential Mission—Miss Almeria's Declaration of Friendship—The Regenerator ascertains an essential fact.

Mrs. GIBSON was quite right when she said that her daughter, Almeria, made a prodigious fuss about her friendship for Miss Meddows. It had been the fashion in the Gibson family, at least among the female part of it, to pronounce rather an unfavourable judgment upon that young lady; Mrs. Gibson declaring her to be by far the most presuming young person she had ever seen; the two eldest Miss Gibsons being of opinion, the one, that she was a young

woman of no reading whatever, and the other, that her conversational powers were much below mediocrity; while the filial Theodosia declared, that it was perfectly painful to watch her conduct to her father, of whom in society she rarely took any notice at all, or, if she did, it was only in the same manner as she might address any other gentleman. Marianne, of course, had no voice at all in the matter, but Almeria, the high-minded, enthusiastic Almeria, distinguished herself on this occasion by differing from them all.

“You are wrong, you are quite wrong!” she said. “You none of you understand Clara Meddows, no, not one! She is a creature full of intelligence. I do not mean to assert that her faculties are developed in the same degree as ours have been, and I must say that it shows want of judgment, or want of candour to expect this. Remember, all of you, just remember the sort of set in which we live. Merciful Heaven! There are beings in our circle who might

‘Create a soul under the ribs of death!’

and can we wonder that the souls of others have

not ripened and expanded themselves as our own have done? Fie! fie upon such unjust reasoning! Clara Meddows, in mind, manners, temperament, and disposition, is exactly what a fair and liberal judge of human nature, accustomed to study it under all varieties of influence, would expect—nay, even admire.”

“I know not what you mean by *expecting*, Almeria, as applied to her,” replied the eldest, and most metaphysical Miss Gibson. “For my own part, I can very correctly assure you, that it is impossible, and altogether contrary to my analytical habits of mind, that *I* should ever have expected any thing beyond the most uninteresting mediocrity from such a formation as hers. Where is the deep-set eye? Where the lines of thought, stamped deep, even in youth, when intellect o’erbears the yielding frame in which it is immured? Where the wild roving of the upward glance? Where the fixed stillness of abstracted thought? Oh! it is monstrous in a form like hers, precisely fitted for the fabled haunts where Mussulmans have lodged their soulless beauties, to expect intel-

ligence, or rather any other mental attribute that might bring her within reach of my regard."

"I differ altogether from you on this matter, Sophy," rejoined Almeria: "and as it is the privilege of all here, as in every other intellectual community, to follow their own will and their own whim in all things, I shall take the liberty of cultivating the friendship of Clara Meddows most assiduously. There is something, too, in the character of her father, that interests me in a degree that seems to have a mixture of fatality in it. He is, I acknowledge, a man of fashion, a man of the material world—I see, I know all this—I know, too, how little such a one has a right to approach the charmed circle, within which burns the eternal, sacred fire of mind. And yet, notwithstanding all this, there are in Sir George Meddows flashes of intellect which, even at the very moment I perceive them, I feel certain would not appear the same to others. This is what I call fatality," added Almeria, shaking her head with a sort of impatient movement, which seemed to indicate the con-

sciousness of being under an influence more powerful than was quite consistent with her peace of mind, or the consistency of her character.

“Sir George Meddows is a widower, isn’t he?” asked Marianne, raising her eyes from the book which she was reading, with that peculiarly stupid look which had doubtless been one of the principal causes of the low estimation which her abilities were held throughout the family. Almeria, of course, took no notice of this most absurd and irrelevant remark, but returning to the theme of her strong affection for Clara, again declared it to be her intention to cultivate an intimacy with her by every means in her power, and without paying the slightest attention to the opinion of any one else on the subject.

No wonder, therefore, that Mrs. Gibson, within a day or two of this conversation, should declare that her daughter Almeria made a fuss about Miss Meddows. She certainly did make a fuss about her.

It will be readily believed that the even-

ing visits of Mr. Marchmont to the Gibson drawing-rooms were not confined to the hebdomadal parties which were given there throughout the London season. On the contrary, it rarely happened that for any two evenings together he was ever absent from them—there were so many things that naturally and almost inevitably brought “the Gibsons” and himself together! In the first place, it was for the most part through his friendly hands that Mrs. Gibson was supplied with that incredible mass of engravings, lithographs, and sometimes even original drawings, by which her celebrated copy of the “Paradise Lost” had already swollen into seventeen very thick volumes; her intention being, under his advice, to continue this “labour of love,” as she enthusiastically called it, till she had brought it up to twenty-four. It was impossible, with such commissions to execute, that constant consultations could be dispensed with. And then it was such pleasure to him to see his fair friends press round him to glean such scraps of editorial intelligence as he ventured to indulge them with, that it would have

been strange indeed had he refused to indulge them.

“People talk of being *au courant du jour*,” said Mrs. Gibson to her daughters, one night after Mr. Marchmont had left them, “as if the being so was sufficient to ensure success in society. But what should we feel, dear girls, were he no more? Conceive the difference! How constantly we get at the character of every thing before it sees the light! No *débutante*, in any walk, appears, of whom we know not how the majority of the press will speak long before their reporters have even seen her. No sooner is a book advertised, than we know (don’t we, dears?) what sort of treatment it will receive. All this is delicious, unappreciable! It is honour, glory, happiness, all in one. Never, never, can we be grateful enough to Marchmont for the steady unvarying friendship which has placed us upon the eminence on which we stand! It should never be forgotten by either of us for a single instant.”

With such feelings between the parties, it was hardly possible they could meet too often,

and it was with vastly more pleasure than surprise that, notwithstanding the long morning visit which has already been described, Mrs. Gibson saw her friend return again at rather an early hour in the evening of the same day.

“Don’t you think I had better bring my nightcap with me next time?” he said, with a sort of tender playfulness, as no less than five fair hands were extended to greet him. “You will decidedly think I mean to live here.”

“Is it possible you can come too often?” demanded Mrs. Gibson.

“Oh ! he knows how delighted we all look when he enters !” said one daughter, “only he affects to be modestly unconscious of it.”

“Come and sit here in your own corner,” said another.

“Do you come to tell us of any thing new?” cried a third, eagerly.

“Whether he does, or does not, we shall be sure to learn something,” said a fourth ; while the ill-mannered Marianne, upon whom, for some reason or other Mr. Marchmont had happened to fix his eyes, yawned without even

the civility of attempting to conceal it. But he was too high-minded to be affected by any thing of the kind, and turning towards her far different sister, replied,

“My business to-night—for I positively have business—is with Miss Almeria. May I, *sans faire un scandale*, petition for five minutes’ *tête-à-tête* with her in the back drawing-room? See what you get by spoiling me as you all do!”

“You may do any thing, Marchmont, in this house; and that I hope you know, without my telling you,” said Mrs. Gibson, warmly.

“Ever the same!—And what says the fair Almeria? But how dare I, ungrateful! to express a doubt, when that dear ready movement has so sweetly answered me?” And, having made this speech, he followed the young lady, who was already tripping before him, to the retirement of the favourite sofa, leaving more than one fair one behind, who would have greatly liked to have been the chosen she. Not, however, that either of them had the slightest suspicion that the requested interview was of

that interesting nature which would indicate a preference leading to any very important results; but Mr. Marchmont was so great a favourite among them, that *any* notice from him might be considered as enviable.

He left not his friend Almeria long in doubt as to the nature of the conversation he sought for.

“My dear girl,” he said, “I believe it is in your power to do me a great service. May I now, as ever, reckon upon your generous friendship?”

“Most assuredly you may,” she replied. “I am sure there is nothing that I would not gladly do for you,”

“You are intimate with the daughter of Sir George Meddows, are you not, my dear Almeria?” demanded the confidential celebrity.

“Oh yes! I am very well acquainted with her—I may say, very intimately,—she is a great favourite of mine.”

“Then will you, with as little delay as possible, learn from her every particular she may happen to know respecting the young man who

was here last night? This information is important for me."

"Charles Chesterfield, I suppose you mean? The young author whom her father patronizes? Perhaps, Mr. Marchmont, the best way will be for me to see Sir George himself about it? If it will be of the least service to you, I will send a message into his study with the greatest pleasure, and I am quite sure he will come to me immediately. He is the most amiable and kindest-hearted man in the world, though people who are not intimate with him fancy that he is too fine for any thing of the kind. But I know to the contrary; and, if you will commission me to mention your name to him, I have not the least doubt in the world, but that he will give you every information in his power," replied Almeria, with amiable alacrity.

"Thank you excessively, my dear Miss Almeria, but I think you do not quite understand me. Did I wish to appear in the matter there would be no need of my troubling you about it. But you must on no account name me, if you please; just ask, as a matter of

personal curiosity, whether the young man's principal object be renown, or,—or, in plain English, whether his project is to write for bread. But I must pray you that these inquiries be addressed to the young lady, and by no means to her father. When a master hand is destined to hold together and regulate a great machine—and every popular periodical publication may most truly be so described—it is absolutely necessary that he should make himself acquainted with the nature, quality, power, and utility of every individual instrument, which he employs therein. But this must not be done by going out into the market-places and highways, tearing this mysterious and oracular machine to pieces before the eyes of all men, and teaching them to comprehend the nature and management of it, as well as he does himself. This would not answer, charming Almeria. There are not many young female heads that I should deem capable of following such an illustration. Not so your own, my fair and gifted girl! You understand me per-

fectly. Is it not so? You require no explanation of a more prosaic kind?"

This flattering appeal to the fair nuncio's acuteness was not only well-timed, but in some degree necessary, for the commission had taken a shape much less agreeable to her than the one she had herself devised; but young ladies of the class and order to which Miss Almeria Gibson belong, can seldom resist an observation on the superior grasp and power of their intellect, and accordingly she gave a charmingly intellectual and intelligent smile, and said, "My dear Mr. Marchmont, you may safely trust the business to me."

In consequence of this conversation Miss Almeria was, on the following morning set down by the voluminous family-carriage at the door of Sir George Meddows. Clara came forth from her *sanctum* and received her in the drawing-room.

Though frequently accused of being intolerably proud, Clara Meddows seldom deserved it. There were occasions, indeed, when her

feelings were of a nature that it might be difficult to describe by any other name; but this was only when approached by persons from whom she shrank as unworthy. At other times, when the coldness of her manner brought the same accusation upon her, it was as blundering as unjust, for it not unfrequently happened that it was truly the result of humility. In other cases, as when exposed to the civilities of the whole Gibson family *en masse*, it was produced by mere weariness, or a feeling of distaste, sometimes perhaps a little too supinely yielded to. But when *tête-à-tête* with Miss Almeria the case was different. This young lady was by no means a bad actress, as was decidedly proved by her obtaining sufficient influence over a mind as much superior to her own in power as is the wing of an eagle to that of a tomtit, to lead its judgment very considerably astray. Not conceiving any possible reason which should induce the young lady to declare that she had never seen any one whose good opinion she so greatly wished to obtain, besides the assigned one of her admiring and loving her

very much indeed, Clara truly believed that such was the fact; and though she did sometimes think that she should have been better pleased had it been otherwise, the idea never crossed her mind without producing a consciousness of ingratitude and a feeling of self-reproach. But the only result of this was a more patient and gentle endurance of Miss Almeria's frequent and very tiresome visits than could have been expected by any one who knew Clara's extreme dislike to the species of annoyance produced by them.

"I will forgive my star, if it disappoints me in every thing else for a week to come!" exclaimed Almeria, as she started from the seat where she had awaited the arrival of her chosen friend. "To find you at home, and to find you alone too, is such a happiness! Oh, you cannot guess! I know you cannot. It is impossible! The having you all to myself, and knowing that you will not turn away your head to any body else. I can give you no idea what a difference that makes to me. I dare say you don't know that you discourse quite as elo-

quently with your eyes as with your lips. And that is saying something, too. But it is true."

"I am sure you are very kind to pay attention to my eyes, or my lips either," replied Clara, endeavouring to smile and look pleased. "I hope your mother and all the family are quite well? It is very good of you to excuse my not having called. You are all well, I hope."

"Oh yes! all quite well. Dear, dearest Miss Meddows! How I have missed you during your absence. Not, Heaven knows! that I see you very often, either, when you are in town, but the barely knowing when we drive within sight of your house that you are *there*, *THERE*, just in that dear spot! Oh! it is a comfort past describing? Greater, I am afraid, than you can have any idea of!"

"You are too kind to me, my dear Miss Gibson. Have you been reading any thing new since I saw you last?" demanded Clara with a sigh of anticipated weariness.

"Alas! dear friend! at our house, I am sorry

to say, we do little else ! Mamma receives so nearly the whole host of living authors (she has forty-seven upon her list) that we are absolutely obliged to read all the new things that come out, lest we should offend any of them by our negligence. Often, indeed, we have to peruse the forthcoming publications in manuscript, which, though excessively gratifying, of course, is a tremendous tax upon one's time. They do all write so dreadfully bad, one would think they did it on purpose. I own I do sometimes think, very seriously, that this is the case."

"That is suspecting them of great cruelty towards the friends whose opinion they seek," replied Clara. "I never yet read a work in manuscript ; but I can easily imagine it to be an operation very likely to be prejudicial to its power of charming. I doubt if I should have patience to get through a thousand pages or so of crabbed writing."

"The works we have to pass judgment upon are seldom of such length as that," rejoined Almeria ; "and happily Mr. Marchmont is

generally by to help us. But, after all, dearest Clara!—Oh! let me call you Clara! May I?—May I call you Clara?”

“Certainly you may,” replied Clara, laughing.

“Then, after all, dearest Clara, let me confess to you, that notwithstanding all the charm, the *prestige*, attending the appearance of each new star in the intellectual horizon, I cannot but think, that to minds such as yours and mine, there are names, now falling into the sere and yellow leaf, equal, if not superior, to any of the present day. I know that this would be classed as pedantry by many. But tell me, is it not your feeling?”

“I believe it is,” replied Clara, “that is, if I rightly understand you.”

“How I adore this noble independence of thought!” cried her companion, in a sort of ecstasy. “I know not another; no, not one who would not at the present moment shrink from such an avowal. Do me justice, I entreat you! Do justice to the glowing admiration and devoted attachment which you have your-

self inspired. Be to me what I would give my right hand to be to you—the treasurer of all my inward thoughts, and the friend of my heart's most pure election !”

It was by no means easy for so quiet-mannered a person as Miss Meddows to answer this outbreak rationally, without giving more pain, or more offence to the speaker than she wished to do ; but, after a moment of reflection, she said,

“I wish it were in my power to deserve better so much flattering partiality. But tell me, Miss Almeria, will you, what you thought of my father's young friend, Charles Chesterfield ? I feel a great deal of interest about him, and shall be very glad if he has made friends among you, and the literary circle he seems to have met at your house.”

Exceedingly well pleased to have the subject of her mission thus brought forward, and the performance of it made so perfectly easy, Miss Almeria replied with even more than her usual animation of manner, that they were all enchanted with him, and could not sufficiently

admire Sir George's "divine benevolence" in thus rescuing from the shade of undeserved obscurity, a being so worthy to receive the cheering light of day!

"I have fifty questions to ask about him—interesting creature!" she continued; "but before I attack you with one, you must positively promise to tell Sir George how enthusiastically I admire his goodness. Tell him, dearest Clara, that my heart swells with all the conscious pride of our glorious nature when I hear of such acts, and that when such beings as himself are the agents in them, they become ten times more lovely still. Will you tell him this, dearest Clara?"

"Upon my word I think I should spoil it, Miss Almeria," said Clara, laughing, and then blushing at the hearty sincerity of the laugh. "It would be a great deal more gratifying if he could hear you say it himself. We are to have a small evening-party on Thursday next, will you and your family, *sans cérémonie*, give us the pleasure of your company?"

"I can answer for myself at least," replied

Almeria, eagerly. "There is no party in London that I would not give up, to pass an evening in your society—nor do I at all doubt that some of the others will accompany me. And now, let me question you *un petit peu*, about this gifted youth. Is he in distressed circumstances?"

"By no means, Miss Gibson," replied Clara, promptly. "On the contrary, his family are, and have been for ages, I believe, in the possession of a very comfortable estate, to which, if I mistake not the family history, this young man will succeed."

"I am so glad to hear it! Then it is not for the sake of making money that he is anxious to publish?"

"I should certainly imagine that any such expectation must be quite a secondary object; for not only is his father in easy circumstances, but the young man himself has just had some thousands left him very unexpectedly by a godmother. Oh! no. Certainly his motives for writing are not mercenary."

"A most delightful anecdote that of the god-

mother's legacy. For it proves decisively, as you will observe, that the poetic *estro* so clearly perceptible in his physiognomy, is sustained by no sordid feeling. Pray tell Sir George, will you? that we shall all feel but too happy in seconding his generous views, by taking every opportunity of introducing him to men of letters who form our chief society." Having made this speech, and insinuated an inquiry into Sir George's morning habits, and been assured that he was very rarely visible at home before dinner, Miss Almeria Gibson departed, leaving Clara quite consoled for the interruption she had endured by the opportunity it had given her of placing poor Charles in an advantageous point of view before the eyes of those with whom he was so evidently eager to associate. Could she have guessed the result her information was likely to produce, she might have acted differently,—but in doing so, she would have been more wise than kind; for she would have closed upon him a prospect that in his estimation, had more of Heaven than earth in it.

CHAPTER X.

Charles Chesterfield's first interview with his Literary Patron—New Lights—Rules for Philosophical Composition—Charles is shown how to Write with Intensity.

HAVING received Miss Almeria's report, Mr. Marchmont despatched by the penny post the following note to Charles Chesterfield, addressed to him at his lodgings in South Molton-street, according to his own request:—

“ Dear Sir,

“ It was impossible for me to send to you yesterday. Alas ! young man ! In my situation, the human animal can no longer be considered as his own property ; and in truth,

before you set your feet upon the literary ladder, it will be well for you to consider whether, should you reach the top of it, as I have done, you will be content to submit yourself to the abnegation of all that is nearest to your individual self, for the sake of the world at large. But somewhat too much of this, perhaps, to one of your fine and ardent temperament. Trust me I have read your inmost soul, as is my wont; and, if you will submit yourself implicitly to my literary pilotage, you shall speedily catch the tide of public favour, and with the favouring gale my breath can give, shall reach that haven of renown for which your spirit pants. My usual address is at the Garrick; and this, if you are ever asked for it, is the one I should wish you to give; but as our connexion is likely to be of a more business-like character than could be conveniently carried on at a club, I request that you call on me to-morrow at eleven o'clock, at No. 95, Long-street, Golden-square. You will probably find me—but this is idle. You will

find me, young man, disposed to serve you, and ever and immutably the same.

“MARCHMONT.”

After having read this letter, Charles Chesterfield laid it on the table before him, and gazed upon it with fixed eyes, clasped hands, and a breast heaving under the influence of sensations equally new and violent.

“It is come!” he cried. “The moment is arrived to which I have so long been looking forward with hope that sickened from uncertainty! Yet, now it is come, I tremble as if some great danger had overtaken me. Mother! Bessy! Would you were near me! Westbrook, venerated Westbrook, too! — But no! — he would do me harm. He could not comprehend this wild tumult of gladness and of doubt. — Doubt? No, no, not doubt—I do not, must not, will not doubt my power. It were treason to myself—

‘My fate cries out,

And makes each petty artery in this body

As hardy as the Nemean lion’s nerve.’

It is not power I want. What I feel working

within my breast at this moment is, and must be, power. No ! All I want is skill to use it rightly. Marchmont ! it is from thee, the admired, the revered, the adored, that I must learn this skill. Oh ! blessed chance that brought me near thee ! Master and guide, I snatch thy offered hand !”

After this burst of feeling, pronounced, if not aloud, yet with articulation distinct enough to relieve the bursting fulness of his heart, Charles remained for several hours apparently very busy ; for again his numerous manuscripts were all brought out, arranged, divided, classed, enveloped in different covers, and then tied together with a trembling hand in readiness to be conveyed on the morrow to the foot of that throne to which his heart of hearts vowed its most firm allegiance. But though employed thus, apparently in very rational accordance with the business which occupied his thoughts, his mind was, in fact, in a state that very nearly approached delirium. Figures of objects and persons, generated between hope and ambition, flitted before him with a distinctness

by no means indicative of mental health. More than once he totally forgot where he was, and at one time sat looking with very alarming wildness at the dusky window that looked out upon the narrow back-court, and the rickety little venetian blinds which concealed whatever abominations the three lowest panes of the said window might have disclosed, if left only to their own dustiness. Upon getting out of this reverie, during which his breast had heaved with a painful feeling of oppression, and a sort of vague notion that he was in a prison, he rose from his chair, rather alarmed at his own conscious wanderings, and, after hastily washing his face and head in cold water, and arranging his dress, set off to take his place at the dinner-table in Bruton-street. The air and the act of walking refreshed him; but the more perfectly he recovered himself, the more he became convinced that the dining with Sir George Meddows would be a trial greater than his strength could bear. The fitful civility of Mrs. Longuéville, the friendly insolence of Sir George, albeit he gave to neither the epithets

they deserved, came to his memory with that sort of sensitive strength of painting, which shows that the balance between the intellectual faculties was slightly shaken, giving to imagination a preponderance more sensible than sane. Even the tranquil loveliness of Clara rose before him with a distinctness that made him start; and though for one moment he fancied that it would be a pleasure to hear her speak to him, and to tell her that he was summoned to wait upon Mr. Marchmont on the morrow, the next made him feel that he was in no state to bear even the gentle questioning of her calm dark eye, or the friendly accents of her touching voice.

So, in a more rational manner than might at that moment have been expected from him, he knocked at Sir George's door, and told the servant that if he were asked for when the family went to dinner, he should inform them that he was going to be very busy that afternoon, and therefore could not have the honour of joining them.

This very judicious measure having been

taken, he again felt relieved for a while from the sort of busy restlessness that had confused his brain, and being vastly too little "*in the body*" to require any food more substantial than air, he paused for a moment to recall a portion of the knowledge he had already acquired from Clara's map, and then set off upon a ramble through the parks. A great many pages, nay, I dare say in skilful hands a great many volumes might be filled, by recording the thoughts which rambled and rioted through the brain of Charles Chesterfield, during the two hours thus employed ; but, at the end of that time, he was decidedly better, for he felt hungry. The poor boy, notwithstanding all his hallucinations, had good sense enough to welcome this symptom very cordially, and having made his way to the same chop-house as had before supplied his wants, made a repast which might have satisfied his mother, 'or even the tender Bessy herself, that he was not in bad health, notwithstanding the feverish flush which still remained upon his cheek.

He slept, too, that night long and soundly ;

for such vehemence of feeling as he had given way to, could not be experienced, even at the age of twenty years and five months, without leaving sensations of lassitude and fatigue behind. But he awoke, lusty as an eagle, and without falling again into the feverish visions of the day before; he enjoyed during his solitary, but most happy breakfast, a series of day-dreams that brought him into precisely the state he could have wished for making his first appearance before the man to whom he was determined to resign the regulation of his future destiny. As for breakfasting in Bruton-street on that morning, he felt it to be quite as impossible, as it had been to dine there the day before—and exactly for the same reason.

Ten o'clock struck, and he indulged himself in another cup of tea; but that taken, and his parcel of manuscripts once more tied a little tighter, and then again tied a little looser, for fear of cutting the paper, he began a course of promenades to the bottom of the staircase, for the purpose of ascertaining by the aid of his landlady's clock, how many minutes remained to

complete the three-quarters past ten, which he was determined should be the moment of his setting off upon the most important expedition of his life.

The moment came; the packet was already in his pocket; his hat already in his hand, and forth he started with feelings such as only those can know, who, like him, have reached the point on which all their hopes stand balanced.

His arrival at the door of No. 95, Long-street, Golden-square, was as precisely at the hour of eleven, as if his limbs had been regulated by machinery as sure-footed as that which regulates the clock of the Horse-guards.

"Is Mr. Marchmont at home?" demanded Charles, in a tone rather less clear and articulate than that in which he usually spoke, though produced with the greatest effort he had ever made to be articulate.

"What may your name be, sir, if you please?" demanded the extremely dirty female, who opened the door.

"Charles Chesterfield—Mr. Charles Chesterfield," was the distinct reply.

“ Perhaps, sir, you would be pleased to write it down upon a bit of card or paper, and then I should be able to tell you in half a minute whether-so-be Mr. Marchmont is at home or not.”

Charles took out his pocket-book, tore a leaf from it, and wrote his name.

“ You may walk into that room there, if you be minded to take a seat while I run up,” said the woman: a civility which he probably owed either to his handsome face, or his evident timidity.

The obliging offer was immediately accepted, and proved to be of considerable utility to the young country stranger, for it convinced him that his own was not, by a great many degrees, the most dismal back-parlour in London.

For the first minute or two he was very profitably employed in noting this; but that interval was quite enough for the purpose, and when it was over, the absence of his messenger appeared almost intolerably long. At length, however, she reappeared, and said,

“Yes, you may go up, young man, as soon as you please, now.”

“And what room must I go to,” demanded Charles, perceiving that she had no thoughts of preceding him.

“The two pair front,” was the answer ; and the next moment the speaker became invisible, absorbed as it were into the earth, through the dark cavity which yawned behind the stairs.

Charles immediately began to mount, and a sort of mother-wit led him to the right door, though the instructions given had been far from appearing explicit to him. His very modest knock produced a sonorous “Come in.”

Young Chesterfield opened the door, and the very inmost shrine of the temple to which he was about to devote himself, appeared displayed before him. For a moment his steps faltered, and he paused, as if uncertain whether he might dare advance into a region that had so much of mystery in its aspect.

“Ah, Chesterfield ! here you are. Come in, and find a chair if you can ; but for Heaven’s sake, don’t disturb my papers !”

To find any thing in that chamber did appear to be a matter of difficulty ; for had Hogarth himself desired to produce a type of disorder, his imagination could hardly have suggested any object or any disarrangement which might not there have found a model, the whole mass being moreover encrusted with such a superficies of universal dirt and dustiness, as might have revolted almost any animal, save a spider.

“ I hope I do not disturb you, sir ? ” said Charles modestly.

“ Nay, if you do, there is no help for it, Chesterfield. In the connexion which we think of forming together, neither of us must ever shrink from interrupting the other. If I understand aright, what Mrs. Gibson has said to me concerning your wishes, you are desirous of devoting yourself to the service of literature and the press ? ” said Mr. Marchmont.

“ I am, sir, ” replied Charles, solemnly.

“ No man, sir, can devote himself to a nobler course, ” returned the great Regenerator, with indescribable dignity. “ I respect you for your high-toned ambition, and am ready, quite

ready, to hold out a hand to steady your uncertain steps, and lead you forward from obscurity into light. But in return for this, I shall of course expect that you devote your talents, whatever they may be, honestly, sincerely, and with the energy that becomes a man, to the occupations I shall place before you."

"It is my most earnest wish to do so, sir," replied Charles, eagerly; "and I hope and believe that you will not be disappointed in me."

"Do not interrupt me, young man. When you have stood a while within the sacred veil, you will become aware that we too have our mysteries, as well as viler craftsmen; and that one of these is, to permit the holder of the position in which I stand, to utter his laws without crossing the promulgation of them, even by applause. You have lived greatly in retirement, I believe. Know you the great omnipotent, the one invincible, the hidden yet proclaimed, the ruler of the universal intellect, the ever-present, never-present we?"

"Sir?" said Charles, looking more than half terrified at the wild *crescendo* energy of this

speech, but assuredly not half understanding it.

Mr. Marchmont laughed. "Nay! look not so wildly, Chesterfield! For you, this autocrat, this hydra, this dragon of a thousand claws, shall be a very gentle monster. And if you deserve it, he shall pet you, my good friend, and when you wish it, he shall lend you his cloak, aye, and his dark lantern, too. It is a cloak of mail, I promise you; and the lantern, dark though it be, is dark only on the side he turns towards himself, throwing a broad red glare on all the world beside, and showing forth the sins of the poor scared multitude in such bold relief, that the purity of his light, and the immensity of their magnitude, become equally conspicuous."

Charles felt himself very painfully mystified. He was as perfectly unacquainted with the periodical press, as if no such mighty engine had ever been constructed; and after blushing to the ears, and pinching his hat for a few agonising moments, he at length replied,

"I am afraid, sir, that I do not perfectly un-

derstand you. I fear that I am not so quick as I would wish to be in seizing upon a metaphor."

"I am afraid so, too, my dear fellow," replied Mr. Marchmont, with smiling benignity. "But be not alarmed; this ignorance, this slowness, however extraordinary at this advanced period of the world's existence, is not fatal—at least, if you lend yourself with readiness and sincerity to acquire the information I am ready to bestow, it *need* not be fatal to your hopes. However, if indeed the omnipotent, the everlasting WE, be unknown to you, it will be impossible as yet to try your strength in criticism. A very essential portion of *The Regenerator* is devoted to the passing sentence on the literary productions of the day. On this as being by far the easiest part of our business, I would have tried your young wing, had you been acquainted, even in a slight degree, with the instrument with which the work is done; but as you are not, I cannot grant you this indulgence at present. However, if we go on well together, Chesterfield, you shall have your

fair share of it hereafter: though, to say truth, I dearly love the work myself. That cut-and-thrust manœuvring from behind a golden screen, lined with a mirror that reflects to our own pleased eyes each daring stroke we give, and sure the while to be cheered by the plaudits of the laughing crowd, is, I confess, the sort of exercise I most delight in. Nevertheless, I let my faithful helpers share it with me occasionally. But towards you this indulgence must be delayed."

"I am ready, sir," said Charles, with a sort of *naïf* self-confidence, "to attempt whatever you will trust to me."

"Suppose, then, my dear fellow, that by way of a *coup d'essai*, you try your hand on a series of papers on '*The Philosophy of Suicide?*'" returned Marchmont, after rapidly running his eye over a long list of *ad captandum* titles, of which he had always a large and varied assortment on hand. "It is a splendid subject, my dear young friend, and has the rare advantage of novelty."

"Certainly," said Charles, colouring, with

eagerness, "it is a subject that affords scope for much eloquence of declamation, and might give occasion," he added thoughtfully, "to many Rembrandt-coloured portrayings of the darker recesses of the human heart. The clear obscure of such meditations must perforce be interesting."

"Good!—very good phrase that. Take a note of it, Chesterfield," said Mr. Marchmont, pushing a pencil towards his young friend. "But instead of *heart*, say *intelligence*. It is more profound."

"But I was going on to say, sir," resumed Charles, encouraged by his patron's commendation, "that I feared I should find little new to say on the philosophical views which may be taken of that most unphilosophical act—though of the morbid feelings which lead to it there may be much."

"D—n it, man! of course there won't be much if you take the same side of the question as all the old fogies who twaddled in the twilight of their intellects (good alliteration that, 'twaddled in the twilight,'" muttered Mr.

Marchmont, parenthetically, as he made a mem. of it), “before the regeneration of the human mind. That won’t do. Keep the antithesis though—jot down *unphilosophical* views which have been taken of that most philosophical act—d’ye see? Never lose any thing, Chesterfield, never let go a *jeu de mots*, or a pun, or a proverb, or any thing else, when you once get hold of it. That is the way we get up what is called the sparkling style. How else d’ye think we could make some of our papers run on, like a *feu de joie*, as they do? You must pay particular attention to this, Mr. Chesterfield; and if any thing bright, like a pun, or a joke of any kind, comes into your head when you are in company, always stop short—never speak it—it is just throwing away so much capital. When once you are known to write in the “Regenerator,” that will be quite sufficient to establish your reputation as a man of talent. You need not trouble yourself to say clever things. We never do, we make a point of it. You may make people stare a little, now and then, by saying something startling and wild. That

answers occasionally very well. But come! suppose you just give me an idea of the way in which you would treat the subject we were talking of. How would you start off upon it?"

To say the truth, Charles had been a good deal puzzled by his patron's hints about fogies and twaddling—but he was quite ready to suppose that it was his own fault, and that he had not clearly followed the line of his argument. He had not the slightest doubt, however, that these fogies who twaddled in twilight before the regeneration of the human mind, were the heathen philosophers, whose doctrines in favour of self-murder he was now called upon to combat; and with this conviction he set about obeying the behest he had received.

"I would first, sir," he said, "take a rapid view of the probable design with which man was created, and of the destinies, for the fulfilment of which he comes into the world. I would then—"

"Good!" interrupted Mr. Marchmont. "Fulfilment of destiny"—"come into the

world.' Very good phrases those. Only it would be as well to get rid of the words 'created' and 'design;' they are objectionable on many accounts. As a general rule, Mr. Chesterfield, to be observed in all philosophical writing, remember to avoid all words and phrases which tend to give a precise and clearly-defined idea to the mind. Notions so formed, must of necessity be narrow and *bornés*. Besides, you may trust my assurance, founded on very ample experience, that the detestable harshness of a rigidly-marked outline, is as prejudicial in philosophy as it is unpicturesque in nature. You will find this last sentence in my "Bacon Blasted, or the New Novum Organon;"—a work, by the bye, which it may be well worth your while to look into before you commence your career as a philosophical writer. I rather flatter myself, you will find it worth some slight attention."

Charles felt as if a film were falling from his eyes. "Bacon Blasted!" he murmured unconsciously—"Bacon Blasted?"

"Yes, Chesterfield, "Bacon Blasted, or the

New Novum Organon," returned Marchmont, laughing." "Does it frighten you?"

"Frighten? Oh! no, sir. Disquisition should never frighten a man." But the first perception of these newly-opening truths is very grand—is almost awful!"

"Capital! Mr. Chesterfield. That sort style will make a hit, I promise you. On with you! Let us have more of it!"

"I am thinking, sir," replied Charles, between a sigh and a smile, "I am thinking how much I shall have to unlearn before I shall be in a state even to begin my studies under you."

"Likely enough, *mon cher*. Unlearn away then as fast as you can—and the sooner you succeed in throwing to the winds the rotten mass of old-world prejudices which hang about you, the sooner will you be able to take your place in the van of advancing intellect, beside the mighty master-spirits with whom it will be in my power to bring you, face to face. This is the object of your ambition, is it not? This is what you aim at?"

“Yes, yes—O yes!” replied Charles, starting almost in terror lest his purpose or his courage should be doubted. “This hope is my dream by night, my ceaseless thought by day. But I see, I see, that I have been hugging darkness while in search of light. And, alas! when this is the case, how great is the darkness!”

“Egad, my boy, you are first-rate!” exclaimed Mr. Marchmont, joyously. “That tirade is a jewel, and I will set it myself, I’ll be hanged if I don’t. You know the old saying about the devil’s quotations. But upon my word, young man, I like you vastly.”

This praise, though he hardly knew for what or wherefore it was bestowed upon him, came in good time to combat the humiliating perception of all the deficiencies of his rustic education, which had so suddenly become visible to himself. The very title of Mr. Marchmont’s work had caused a sort of mental convulsion within him, that would have almost shaken his reason, had not his will at once dragged down his intellect, and brought it prisoner to the

footstool of the great man who stood before him, surrounded to his eyes by all the splendour of metropolitan renown. There was no struggle, therefore, or it was so slight as hardly to deserve the name, ere his prostrate mind submitted itself to this tyrannical authority, and instead of continuing the sketch of his intended article, he said with touching modesty,

“Perhaps, sir, as this will be my first introduction to the pages of the ‘Regenerator,’ it would be better if you were to give me some idea of the line of reasoning which your own elevated principles, and deep knowledge of the human heart would suggest to you on the subject you have named.”

“Better, my lad? Why yes, I suppose there is no great doubt that it would be better; but that’s a sort of bore that I should never think of submitting to. However, as you really do seem to have something in you, I will for once and away give you a few notes. But it is only for once and away; remember, you must not ask me again. It is a sort of slavery that I could not submit to twice.”

"I cannot thank you enough for your kindness, sir," replied Charles, "and I trust I shall never be so ungrateful as to abuse it. But at the first outset I certainly do want your help."

"That's all right, and natural enough. Now then you must wait upon me." And as he said this Mr. Marchmont settled himself in his arm chair, stretched out his legs, and assumed the air of a person determined to be very particularly at his ease.

"Believe me, I would not change the office to become chamberlain to the king!" exclaimed Charles, with enthusiasm; and, suddenly rising he placed himself before his patron as if waiting for orders, and eager to obey them.

"You are the right stuff, Chesterfield, I see that—and you'll become a prime favourite, if you will but go on as you have begun. First bring me over that blotting-book, and the scrap of paper that lies beside it. Now the ink. Can you mend a pen, Chesterfield?"

"Yes."

"That's well—mend me two. Now then, I have got the whole train of argument as clear as

the lustrous eyes of Emmeline. But I shall make nothing of it, my dear fellow, without my golden spurs. You shall have the honour of putting them on for me."

Charles looked at him as if ready to fly at his bidding the moment it should become intelligible, but as yet most profoundly ignorant as to what it might be.

Marchmont laughed. "You do not understand that figure of speech, my new friend? Never mind, you shall soon be initiated. You have heard of Pegasus, I suppose, have you not?"

"The winged horse that bears you in your hours of inspiration high, high aloft, far above human ken," replied Charles, kindling, as he more and more felt the intimacy of the precious intercourse he was enjoying.

"Ay, *mon cher*, that's the cattle I mean. But those who ride want spurs, you know, let the beast be of earth or heaven. Now my spurs, you must know, my golden spurs, are lodged behind those volumes of Jefferson. Go about it gently; there, that's it, first the tumbler and

teaspoon, then the brandy-bottle. The sugar stands on that table yonder, and as for the hot water, I dare say you'll find enough in that little tin cup on the hob. Now Chesterfield! do you think you have wit enough to mix a tumbler worthy of the Regenerator?"

"I will try, sir," said the young man, setting about the task assigned him, and determined to bring to bear upon it all the experience he had, which, to say truth, was very little.

"*Halt là !*" bellowed his friend, as he saw him draining the limped contents of the tin cup into the tumbler. "God help you, my boy, is that your notion of the golden spur? Back with that dolorously copious portion of Adam's ale, my good friend. That's too much still, just leave half of it, Chesterfield—that will do. Now fill it to the brim with the water of life! You look surprised. Alas! my friend! an intellect so overworked as mine, has need of this. Byron, as of course you know, was incapable of writing a single line before he had roused his spirit by a cup like this—only, instead of using water at all, it is said he made a mixture in equal por-

tions of laudanum and blood, and with that alone tempered the potent draught."

"Gracious Heaven ! Is that possible ?" demanded Charles, with a shudder. "Surely you are but jesting !" and Charles smiled, but grimly.

"Possible ? Jestings ? It is as certainly true as that you stand there—nay, more, when he felt the god-like madness stir within him, I have been told, nor do I doubt the fact, that he was wont to pour the inspiring potion into a human scull, and thence to quaff it ! Is there not something grand, magnificent, intense in this ? Do you not feel the very pulse of poesy throb in your temples as you hear of it. I am sure I do," added the Regenerator, swallowing the last mouthful of the potent dose. "I feel it in every vein, in every fibre ; and the world shall know that I do, Chesterfield, when I can find leisure to begin my immortal poem. The title of that poem is fixed—fixed as fate, young man ; no earthly motive shall ever induce me to change it. But think not to know it yet. I love you well, upon my soul I do ; but we must be bound

together by long, strong, tried affection, ere the deep sublime of these dread words shall pass into your soul from my confiding lips. Not yet!—not yet!” and the Regenerator moved his hand mysteriously.

Charles trembled with emotion. Was he indeed so near, so very near the charmed circle which contained within itself the well-head of immortality? Was it indeed thus that Byron wrought? Was it thus that Marchmont had attained the glorious elevation on which he stood? If so, might he not hope, might he not try himself? The Welsh giant, so gloriously immortalized in “Jack the Giant Killer,” conceived a thought extremely like to this, at the most critical moment of his destiny. But Chesterfield did not remember this, it might perhaps have been useful to him if he had.

“Come, you young what’s-your-name,” resumed the Pindar in *esse*, “it is no good for you to stand there, looking like a duck in thunder. Come and place yourself behind me, and read the words as I write them. You will see how it is done, at any rate, though I won’t quite

promise you should do the like. Now for it! I am in the vein! I feel the burning thoughts—the scorching words!”

Mr. Marchmont, as he uttered the last sentence, seized the pen, and began writing, sometimes very rapidly for lines together, sometimes slowly, with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, as if looking there for the words he sought; while Charles the while stood fixed behind him, greedily swallowing the characters as they became visible.

“THOUGHTS ON SUICIDE.

“Let us thank the gods that there is on this momentous subject one simple fact which never has been doubted, namely—that as man is not consulted respecting his entrance into the world, he has clearly and indefeasibly the right to quit it at his pleasure. A prisoner of war is considered at liberty to effect his escape whenever an opportunity may offer, provided he has not given his parole to remain in durance. And when did man, either directly or indirectly, give his parole to remain in this fleshy prison-house?”

“Do you see, Chesterfield? You read as I go on, don’t you?” said the animated penman, suddenly turning himself round in his chair, and fixing his glaring eyes on Charles.

"I do not lose a word, sir," replied the young man.

"Observe, then," resumed the Regenerator. "Here is a point on which you must dilate; a multitude of magnificent illustrations must, of course, occur to you here. I have sown the seed, my good fellow, and if dulness does not stifle it, a copious harvest must follow." Mr. Marchmont then knocked his spoon sharply upon the edge of his glass, and resumed his pen.

"The soul, by its own nature, demonstrates its right to freedom from earthly bonds. Are we able to bind it for an instant?"

"I am in great force at this moment," he muttered, and again striking his glass, went on writing:

"Are we able to bind the subtile essence for an instant? What is that elevated and delicious state of intellectual emancipation called by the vile vulgar wool-gathering? What, but the unmistakable declaration of the soul, that it must and will be free?"

"But, Chesterfield, what are you about all this time? Twice I have begged, implored, besought you to replenish this silly-looking

empty glass. What can be your notion of intellectual labour? Why even the mighty steam-engine itself wants oil. How then can a weak machine like man get on unaided?"

Stammering a hasty apology about not having understood his signal, and being altogether occupied by following the movements of his pen, Charles rapidly replenished the tumbler, and then replaced himself behind Marchmont's chair, who having nearly drained it at a single draught, resumed his pen, and with renovated inspiration resumed his scrawl.

"Shall, then, the unjustifiable clog of a forced incarnation inflict the miseries of matter upon the immaterial spark, nor leave be left to shake it off at will?"

"Bring me one of those cigars, will you?—those lying there on the chimneypiece. Great Jove! how magnificent is this flow of thought! Mark me, Chesterfield, at this moment; the divine essence is at work within me! Like the immortal oracles of old, I feel the sacred voice within, and give it utterance, almost without volition.

"Never, no never, can that ethereal spark part, or, as



A Composing Draught.





it were, crackle and sparkle in eagerness to wing its rapid way midst kindred essences, along the bright interminable regions of the starry vault, without giving proof as strong as nature's self can offer, that suicide is the most glorious act the hand of man can achieve. What is the blood which follows such a stroke, but a libation to the power of mind? Yet, despite the strictest deductions of argumentative ratiocination, proving the absurdity of man's remaining here one instant after it seems good to his intelligence that he should leave the life he loathes, the wretched bigots who still hold rule among us would bury him in a crossing of four roads, and drive a stake through his body to punish it for having let loose its tenant soul! Idiots! the day may come, perhaps, and at no distant date, when the cross-road and the stake shall be the doom of those who cowardly have lived to the last gasp of their allotted span, nor dared to choose the moment for themselves."

"But this won't do," exclaimed Mr. Marchmont, suddenly interrupting himself, and wiping his forehead. "I find, my dear sir, that this subject inspires me to such a degree, that it would be culpable, as editor of *The Regenerator*, were I to give it into other hands. I have written one or two sentences here that—in short, that I cannot part with. I speak as a matter of duty, nothing else, I assure you—I really must go on with this subject myself, and

shall make a leader of it. Leave me, Mr. Chesterfield, I have occasional headaches, which often follow these remarkable flashes of inspiration, and I wish to put the present moment to profit, before either the headach, or its sleepy remedy fall upon me."

"I will go this moment, sir," replied Charles, a little frightened, and a good deal disappointed by this sudden dismissal. "But let me know first, if it still be your wish that I should write for *The Regenerator*."

"Confound it! you are not touchy I hope?—My wish?—To be sure it is; and if I don't persevere in writing a skeleton sketch for you it is only because I think you are able to do without it. You are very clever, Chesterfield, there is no question about it—the sort of effect I produce upon you, decidedly shows it. No slow, heavy earthworm of a pedant ever kindled as you do—you are perfectly capable of working by yourself."

"Then so encouraged, may I ask you, sir, if there would be any objection to my selecting for my theme the immortality of the soul?"

The splendid theory upon man's right of will, which you have just produced leads, as it seems to me, directly to the subject; and perhaps my article might have the honour of following yours? The mere idea that it might do so, inspires me."

"Stop a moment! for heaven's sake, don't run away with any ridiculous *non sequiturs*. I should never forgive myself if I led you into any such absurdity. If you fall to work on that rather musty subject at all, you must take devilish good care that you do it with a spirit perfectly philosophical. It would be ruin to *The Regenerator*, perfect ruin, sir, if that theme were to be treated in a twaddling manner in its pages. For the most part, our system is to avoid every thing approaching to what are ordinarily classed as religious subjects. This restraint, however, will probably not be necessary much longer; and, as soon as it can be safely thrown off, it is my purpose to imbody, in a series of essays, all the arguments against Christianity brought forward by Mr. Robert Owen at Cincinnati, in the year 1828, during

his famous controversy with the Reverend Mr. Campbell, in which he undertook to prove to the world the fallacy of the whole thing. The present is a noble opportunity for declamation on this promising subject, and it is by no means my intention to lose it."

So strongly, as yet, did Chesterfield's religious education cling to him, that though exceedingly vexed at finding how difficult it was for him to follow the rapid transitions of such a mind as Mr. Marchmont's, he doubted not but that in some way or other THE TRUTH would be brought forth from all the difficult processes to which he perceived it was that gentleman's method to submit it, like gold from the crucible. But nevertheless, he felt that he was himself, for the present at least, quite unequal to perform any of the intermediate operations by which this desirable result was to be obtained; and therefore taking his hat from under the table, and making a most respectful bow, he said,

"Perhaps, sir, just at first it may be safer for me to confine myself to some short work

of imagination. Will you give me leave to wait upon you in a day or two with something of this kind, both in verse and prose?"

"Yes, yes, you are very right. If I find you possess facility of composition, I can let you mount afterwards. Good bye, good bye. Off with you, I am getting devilish sleepy, already."

Charles Chesterfield then repeated his bow and departed; and, as he shut the door, the head of the inspired philosopher sank on his breast, his eyes closed, and a heavy sleep nestling round him, like cotton on a burn, once more stilled the throbbing pulses of his glowing soul.

CHAPTER XI.

Sir George Meddows's constant appetite for "Change"
—A Peep behind the Curtain—Family Secrets—A
"Monster hated by Gods and Men."

THE day which Mrs. Longuéville and Clara had fixed for their first evening party was rather an unfortunate one for any thing of the kind; for the morning of it produced one or two events by no means agreeable. During the breakfast, indeed, the family trio, with the addition of Charles, were rather more gay than usual, for Sir George was in high good-humour; Mrs. Longuéville had succeeded in coaxing Clara out of a pair of gold bracelets, which for

some weeks she had been endeavouring to seduce from her niece's trinket box to her own; Clara herself was rather less grave than ordinary; and Charles had that morning run off a dozen verses in praise of Love, which he could not help thinking were not altogether unworthy of *The Regenerator*.

"Why, Charles, you are positively growing dandyish," said Sir George, looking at the young man's handsome hair, which had certainly been rather carefully arranged, notwithstanding his poetic occupation. "I'll be hanged if he has not learned the wave destructive already!"

The youthful novice blushed and smiled, while Mrs. Longuéville, remembering her lesson, condescended to say,

"Mr. Chesterfield has such remarkably fine hair, that it really deserves a little attention."

"What are you going to do with yourself this evening, my dear fellow?" said the condescending baronet.

Charles, once more a little surprised, was however preparing to answer that he should be

engaged at his lodgings, when Clara stopped him, by saying,

“ I consider Mr. Chesterfield engaged to me for this evening. Some of the Gibson family will be here whom he will like to meet, and I have also invited the celebrated Mrs. Sherbourne ; she is going every where at present and is quite the fashion. Mr. Chesterfield will, of course, like to make her acquaintance. Her play is to come out in a week or two, and then it will of course be a vice not to know her.”

“ Right, right, Clara, I am really obliged to you for thinking of it; that is all very considerate and kind. I was not aware of your literary department being in such force to-night; you must pass your evening with us, then, my dear Charles—no excuses—I shall not part with you to-night, say what you will. Your interest is as dear to me as that of my own family—which I need not tell you, however, for by this time you must know so much of me at any rate. What a plague there is to get change. Can any of you lend me six or

seven shillings before I go out? If I send out for it, I shall be too late for my appointment."

Mrs. Longuéville declared that she had not a sixpence in the world. Clara sighed, not very audibly, but said nothing; till Charles, taking out a little purse that Bessy had constructed for him, drew thence three or four shillings and half-a-sovereign. She then said with considerable vivacity,

"Don't trouble yourself, Mr. Chesterfield, I dare say I shall be able to find as much silver as my father requires for the moment," and she too drew out her purse and laid a few shillings upon the table.

"Why you are both overflowing with the

'Pale and common drudge 'tween man and man,'

as Shakspeare very uncivilly calls that extremely convenient article, silver money; while I, alas the while! possess not the accommodation of a silver groat. Hold there, Charles! positively you shall neither of you put up your purses till I have taken toll: you have no idea how I was bothered yesterday by the want of change."

And suiting the action to the word, the lively baronet stretched out a hand to each. Charles immediately deposited his stock of shillings in the one presented to him, and was closing the clasp of his small treasury, when Sir George laying his hand upon it, and gaily laughing, said, "Nay, you shall lend me that little yellow one, too—I'll pay you this evening, my dear fellow, *sans faute*. By the bye, Charles, I must have you taught French," he added, carelessly dropping the contents of each hand into his two waistcoat-pockets.

Clara's face was seen by no one, for at the same moment that she placed the money in her father's hand, she pushed back her chair, and suddenly rising, walked out of the room, with a step so hasty as to be almost unsteady.

She remained absent but a few minutes, however, which were employed by Sir George in proving to his *protégé* that the acquirement of the French language was indispensable for him; but when she returned, Charles raised his eyes to her face, and fancied that he perceived the traces of tears on the fairest cheeks in the

world. He was shocked and he was puzzled, became perfectly unable to follow the thread of his patron's animated discourse, and would have given a joint of his little finger to know what it was that caused her unhappiness, or at any rate her very obvious agitation.

Sir George Meddows had in some degree acquired the habit of not looking in his daughter's face, and therefore it is possible that the appearance which so strongly moved Charles was not perceived by him. Be this as it may, however, the conversation languished, and the breakfast speedily came to a conclusion. Charles, as usual, retreated to his lodgings, the ladies to their separate morning rooms, and Sir George to his library, where he amused himself for an hour or too, notwithstanding his pressing appointment.

Before we follow him thither we will give a sketch, a very short sketch, of the position of his daughter. Of her character and of her feelings no explanation is necessary beyond what events will bring forth; but these will be better understood if the circumstances in which she

stood be clearly stated. From Sir George's having no son, it followed, as a matter of course in public opinion, that his only daughter must be an heiress, and so she certainly would have been had her father possessed any thing to bequeath. But beyond his life interest in a dilapidated and very encumbered estate, Sir George Meddows possessed only a few thousands less than nothing. He had never hinted at this fact to his daughter; but there was, unfortunately perhaps for her peace, a sort of habitual logic in the mind of poor Clara, which led her involuntarily to infer this truth, as well as many others, from] circumstances that passed before her eyes, but in which she bore no other part than that of a silent, sentient, and most unhappy spectator. Without ever having heard the subject alluded to, she was quite sure that her father was not only poor, but in debt. By the same silent process she had also come to the conviction that it was very much against his inclination that either circumstances should be known in his family, or out of it; nay, more, that frequent efforts were made

on his part to confirm the idea that she was heiress to a large fortune. She knew, too, or rather, perhaps, she did very strongly suspect, that his embarrassments were sometimes of a kind which [rendered ‘the very smallest trifles acceptable,’ and the sufferings produced by this suspicion, and by one still worse which followed it, respecting the nature of the means sometimes taken to obtain such trifles, were sufficient to poison her existence, blight her youth, and sometimes almost to change her nature from the shrinking delicacy of feminine gentleness to a sternness of feeling very greatly its reverse. Nevertheless, Clara was—but there is no use in thus forestalling.

It was certainly on the whole, a great blessing to her that a cousin of her mother’s had left her five thousand pounds sterling, vested in the English funds, of which she came into possession on her twenty-first birthday. This was certainly a blessing, inasmuch as it spared her the petty but vile annoyance of asking supply for her personal wants. Yet, though conscious of the relief thus brought, and thankful for it,

there were moments when the having to battle against her pitiful father's cupidity, by resisting his incessant borrowings, caused her more suffering, she thought, than any mere want of money could have brought with it. Before she had been of age three months, Sir George gave her to understand that, as his first object in life was to see her take her proper station in the world, he was compelled to tax her little income to contribute to the expense which he deemed it necessary to incur on her account. To this she had most willingly acceded ; and, reserving fifty pounds a year for her own expenses, regularly paid over to him the remainder as soon as it reached her hands. The little heartachs revealed by this hasty sketch, are not either of the sublime or the pathetic kind ; but, as *Mercutio* says of his scratch, though not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church-door, yet 'twas enough ; and a 'grave' girl was Clara, despite her youth and loveliness, and a multitude of other very precious gifts besides.

Before Sir George Meddows had well seated himself in his library, after quitting the break-

fast-table, and while his betting-book was still unopened in his hand, a servant entered and announced, "Mr. Cromwell."

"What the devil did you let him—" but before the "*in for*" could be spoken, the long-nosed, thin-lipped, brown-bobbed individual named, was already in the room, and the betting-book being quickly smothered under a mass of newspapers, Sir George stepped gracefully forward, with an extended hand.

"'Morning, Sir George," said the visiter, apparently not perceiving the offered hand, and employing his own dexter limb in exploring the depths of his coat-pocket, while its fellow held his broad hat, and gold-tipped cane.

"I am particularly glad to see you, Cromwell," said the baronet, seating himself with the air of one preparing for a comfortable cose, "you are exactly the man I wanted to see."

"That's lucky, sir. But, if you please, we will attend to my business first; and then, if you have any thing new to say to me you may say it," replied Mr. Cromwell, seating himself

at the table, and depositing thereon a very large pocket-book.

“So be it, Cromwell, so be it,” returned Sir George, with the most perfect good humour. “Now then, what is your business?”

Mr. Cromwell drew up his mouth with a grave sort of smile, and said, “Well now, Sir George Meddows, I should have thought you might have been able to guess. However, I have not the least objection to tell you. I am come for the sum of seven hundred and eighty-five pounds, the payment of which, in one manner or another, you have promised about seven hundred and eighty-five times within the last two years. I don’t mean to wait any longer, Sir George. You will be pleased to give me a draught for the sum directly. I have need of the money, and must have it forthwith, without palaver, procrastination, or delay.”

“Egad, Cromwell, it is a curious coincidence that I wanted to talk to you exactly on the same subject. That money has been owing too long, Cromwell. It vexes me. I can’t endure any

thing of the sort. There is not a more systematic man living, in accounts, than I am. Ask round about my place in the country, and you will hear what sort of a character I have in that respect. But to be sure there never was such a devilish string of unlucky accidents as have happened to me about this paltry sum, which, after all, I borrowed for the convenience of a friend, and in no way whatever for my own. I never had a sixpence of it."

"That was very gracious and kind of you, Sir George, but it don't make the least bit of difference to me. I hope it did him good, whoever he was : but, if it was the ruin of him, I must have it again, just the same. And, I'm sorry to say, I am rather in a particular hurry. I have got your promissory note here, in my pocket-book, and I dare say you have got your check-book there in that desk, so the business may be settled at once."

"To be sure it may, Cromwell ; what is there to delay it ?" replied the smiling debtor, drawing the desk towards him ; and then, while seeking, in more pockets than one, for the key

of it, he added, " But what I wanted to consult you upon will rather help than hinder us. Observe, Cromwell, the fact is, that notwithstanding all my care and caution, and I will defy any man to point out a person more scrupulously regular in his accounts than I am; yet, notwithstanding this, my careless steward in Ireland has managed matters so badly that I declare to you, strange as it must seem to any body who knows my manner of doing business, he has contrived to leave the estate completely out at elbows. I say *leave*, because, of course, I have sent him off, and at this moment I am actually managing the whole concern myself. This is an undertaking, my dear Mr. Cromwell, vastly more troublesome to me than it would be to most people, from my systematic habits of regularity in all money matters. Most others would, I dare say, let things go on till the estate had cleared itself, which it would do with only tolerable management in three years, for it is a noble property, a very noble property, but I can't endure the sort of thing. To feel that I have an encumbered estate for

three months would render me perfectly miserable, and before the end of the three years I believe I should hang myself. I cannot endure any thing of the kind."

Mr. Cromwell here drew out his watch, and having cast his eyes upon it said, rising as he spoke, " I beg your pardon, Sir George, but I really am in haste, very great haste; give me the check, if you please, and some other day I will call, if you wish it, and hear all you may wish to say about your estate in Ireland. But just at this moment I must take leave to observe, that your business is of less importance to me than my own. It's unpolite to say it, I suppose, but so it is."

" Of course it is, Mr. Cromwell. A man of my business-like habits is hardly likely to blunder on that point. But, give me leave to say, you are rather over hasty, my good friend. Every word I have said, or am about to say, concerns your affairs, fully as much as my own. In a word, sir, my intention is to make a great sacrifice of immediate income for the purpose

of at once clearing the property. I am ready to offer nine per cent., Mr. Cromwell, for a loan of five thousand pounds; and the moment I made up my mind to do this, I determined, as a return for the obliging readiness with which you lent me the trifle for which you now apply, to offer this very advantageous little mortgage to you. Now, sir, I hope you will be ready to allow that I have not detained you by any unmeaning wordiness, and that what I had to say to you was of some importance."

"Certainly sir, certainly. I don't think you ever speak without meaning, Sir George, and I should hold him to be a very dull-pated fellow who suspected it. Nine per cent. is very fine interest, Sir George Meddows, and when secured upon a fine property, with no other encumbrance, is not to be refused lightly—most certainly it is great interest."

"I own I think so," interrupted Sir George, rather proudly.

"No question about it, Sir George Meddows, the thing speaks for itself. I will give you an

answer to your proposal this day week; and now—as I really am under a great pressure of business—”

“Oh! that will do perfectly, Cromwell,” said Sir George, rising and applying his hand to the bell, “never mind about *now*, as you are in a hurry. Good morning, I will not detain you a moment longer; and pray be assured that the time of a man of business is, in my eyes, as precious as the gold of Ophir.”

“It is, sir, when employed as it ought to be. But the affair which brought me here seems to have escaped your memory. I must have your check, Sir George, before I leave the room, for seven hundred and eighty-five pounds, for which I have your bill in my pocket-book. You cannot, with your very regular habits of business, have forgotten how often I have applied for it, how often payment has been promised, and how often I have been disappointed. I do not intend to be disappointed again.”

“I have memoranda, sir, with dates affixed, of every transaction connected with the business,” replied Sir George solemnly; “but you

must think I am jesting with you, Mr. Cromwell, if you suppose that my proposition was to pay you with one hand and to borrow from you with the other. Of all men in the world, you and I are the last who should waste our moments in bandying such idle words as these. The interest charged by you on your former loan was five per cent. ; of course, as a gentleman, and a man of honour, it is my intention to include this sum of seven hundred and eighty-five pounds in the mortgage money for which we are now negotiating, at nine per cent. This, sir, must, I think, fully satisfy you."

"I have promised to enter with you on this mortgage business, Sir George, this day week," replied Cromwell, "but your present debt to me must be settled immediately. Your next memorandum on the subject must be that you have paid me this debt—or—that an execution was sent into your house for the recovery of it."

"You are using very strange language!" said Sir George, changing colour very perceptibly. "Of course," he resumed, "I have no suspicion

of your putting your savage menace into execution; but the unnecessarily alluding to such measures can scarcely be considered as consistent with the manners of a gentleman."

"Very likely, Sir George Meddows. I never affected to be a gentleman, I have no right to the title. I am a money-lender. Is it your intention, sir, to pay me immediately? If not it is mine to send a writ of execution into your house before night."

The manner of Sir George suddenly changed. He ceased either to cajole or to bluster. "Had I been aware," he said, "that you were really in want of this money, Mr. Cromwell, I should have paid you long ago. But the reports which have reached me of your being a wealthy man, led me to consider the precise time of repayment as a matter of as little importance to you as it certainly is to me. Give me leave to run my eye over my banking-book. I received it but yesterday with the balance made out, or with my regularity I should hardly be at a loss to tell you at once whether I have funds there equal to your demand, without encroaching

upon the thousand pounds which I always chose should remain with them; and you must pardon me if I say, Mr. Cromwell, that not even your blustering threat will induce me to break a rule so long held sacred by me upon monetary principles of aristocratic delicacy, as essential to my station, in my opinion, as the crest upon my coat of arms."

While he said this, Sir George, employed himself in unlocking a drawer of his library table, and taking thence the vellum-covered repository of his most secret knowledge, and Mr. Cromwell very composedly took snuff.

"No, sir," resumed Sir George, after glancing his eye upon the mystic page, and returning the book to its place, "I cannot give you a check to the amount you demand."

"Then I wish you good morning, sir," said the money-lender, rising, and rather unceremoniously putting on his expansive hat.

"Stay, sir!" said Sir George, intercepting his progress towards the door. "Let me understand you clearly. Is it seriously your purpose to send an execution into my house?"

“ Yes, sir,” replied Mr. Cromwell.

“ To-day ?”

“ Within half an hour, sir. The proper persons are already aware of what they have to do on my quitting the house, provided I do not countermand the orders I have given.”

“ Then assuredly, Mr. Cromwell, I shall not permit you to quit my house without being paid. To you, I dare say, the inconveniences of such a mode of dunning for payment are not so apparent as to persons in a different station : and, therefore, I shall hold myself bound to excuse you. Remain where you are, if you please. Or—no—rather permit me to escort you into the waiting-room on the other side of the hall. You will remain, sir, while I write to a friend to assist me in making the payment thus rudely called for ; and, during the interval, you may meditate on the wisdom of your conduct.”

Mr. Cromwell took off his hat again, and permitted his dignified host to lead him to the receptacle of great-coats and umbrellas which he had mentioned, amidst which he seated himself with very philosophic composure.

Returned to the library, Sir George Meddows sat down to his writing-desk in no very pleasant frame of mind. The business itself was sufficiently disagreeable, and was rendered more so by his uncertainty as to how he should set about it. There were already so very many of his dear friends to whom he owed as much money as he could conveniently contrive to get out of them, that he did not even trouble himself to run the names of any such over in his memory. No, there were but three persons who stood before his mind's eye for selection. The first of these was his sister, Mrs. Longuéville; but she was dismissed as soon as looked at. True, all she had was in the English funds, and the sum he required might have been made over to him with most satisfactory facility. But he knew her too well to hope that his specious eloquence, used at its very highest pressure, would extract a shilling from her without security as good as that which she held already. The next person in the trio was his daughter. The readiness of the transfer would in this case be the same; and, moreover, he felt as sure that his

request would be granted by Clara, as he was that it would be refused by her aunt. Nevertheless, there were objections, and mighty ones, to his making this demand upon her little fortune. That which naturally presented itself to him first was, the fact that he should inevitably, and without any power whatever of procrastination or shuffling, be obliged half-yearly to pay the interest with exactly the same regularity as the Bank of England paid theirs ; or, in other words, the dividends which he now received upon it he should receive no longer. This consideration was strong against the deed. But there was something stronger still, though even to himself he would not have acknowledged it, which settled the matter almost before he was aware of it. This unacknowledged something was the look of Clara's eye, such as he had already seen it when it had fixed itself quietly upon him after any of the thousand and one tricks by which he sustained his tottering position had chanced to reach her knowledge. It was rather, therefore, a sensation than an argument which made him rapidly turn his thoughts from this

measure, and seize upon his pen, to address himself without further delay to the third party whom this exigency had brought to his mind as one capable of assisting him. Having once decided, the letter did not take long to write, and ran thus :

“ My dear Dalrymple,

“ For God’s sake come to me directly. A most vexatious and wholly unexpected circumstance has occurred, which requires the aid of a friend ; but I could not endure to ask this aid of any one with whom I was in less close and intimate relationship than yourself. Fail me not therefore, but let me see you with as little delay as possible.

“ Faithfully yours,

“ GEORGE MEDDOWS.”

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